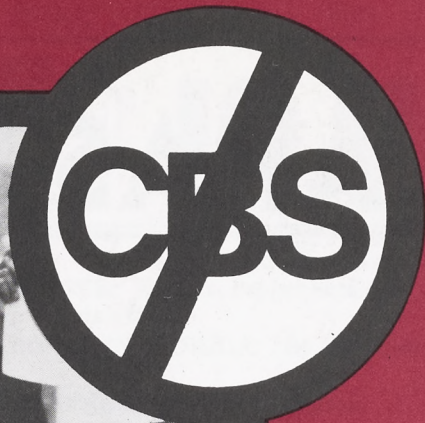




THE TREK



in UNITY

MAGAZINE OF THE UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP
OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES
JUNE/JULY 1980

TALLAHASSEE

The Rev. Pepper Shields

"We are marching to Tallahassee" you said,
And I thought of swamps and alligators
of sand and snakes and sun.
"We are marching to..."
And I wondered where you rallied from
and why you chose Tallahassee to march toward.

"We are marching..."
And I heard the sound of tramping feet
saw flags and banners waving.

"We are..."
And I thought of words like
determination
perseverance
endurance.

"We..."
And I wondered, who is "we"
I pictured a mass of nameless faces
and wondered who you were
Why you were
marching
to
Tallahassee.

Was it because
you wanted your names in a newspaper headline
or on a radio broadcast
Was it because
it seemed "the thing to do"
Because you wanted to be part of a CAUSE
From my safe distance I asked some questions
and got some unexpected answers.

"We"
are people -- humans -- creations of God
Who have been told we are not people
not human
not of God.

"We are"
here
refuse to go away
will not be ignored.

"We are marching"
moving
together
sharing our fear and courage
doubt and hope
pain and joy

"We are marching to"
we have a purpose
direction
we are going toward freedom
life
equality

We are going out there
to meet the prejudice
the pain/bigotry/hatred
"We are marching to Tallahassee"
Call it Atlanta
Washington
Detroit
Melbourne
London
Toronto
We are marching toward wherever
people are chained
abused
rejected
discounted

Our pain has told us it is time to march
fight
pray
teach
encourage

We march for ourselves
and for you who will not/cannot march
We march for
our sisters and brothers whose blood
splatters concrete

whose souls
could not bear the torment
whose bodies
lie in unclaimed graves
whose memories
torture our nights
and mock our days

We march against
the pain of persecution
the agony of intolerance
the despair of rejection

We march for
freedom
dignity
truth
justice

We march because we
must!
From my no-longer safe place
I whispered "Thank you"
and

"I think it's time
for me
to
march
to...."



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We marched in Florida

By The Rev. Elder Jeri Ann Harvey

Well, there we were on an airplane in the middle of the night going to a place in the middle of Florida to be in the tail end of a march that had been called for because of the rhetoric of a small man with a very large mouth, The Rev. Sutek.

We had been called the night before because some truckers with loaded or unloaded shot guns hanging in the rear windows of their trucks, had gone by shouting obscenities, particularly to the women in the march, and had thrown beer bottles and cans at several people, threatening to come back to the known camp site for that night.

Rev. Perry and myself, along with two members of MCC-LA, Terry Luton and Pat Underwood, met in the Atlanta, Georgia airport and then continued our journey on to Tallahassee, Florida. On our arrival there we were met by hot, tired members of the trek who seemed, and I hope, to take some new strength in the fact that we had arrived refreshed and full of love and gratitude to them who had walked so very far for all of us.

There aren't any words to really convey what I felt when we drove up to join with the marchers. There was a sense of pride and dignity that really surpasses any known words. There was every size, shape and description of person. There was black and white, male and female, Latinos and now a Native American. I

should say two Native Americans since the Rev. Perry is also part Cherokee, which we sometimes forget.

But arrive we did and as we arrived so did over 200 telegrams from different parts of the United States, as far northwest as Alaska and northeast as Washington, D.C. and New York, including telegrams from the Governor of California, the Mayor of Washington, D.C., the entire City Council of Los Angeles and telegrams from the gay alliances throughout the major cities of Alaska. As these telegrams poured in, demanding that our human right for security be recognized, the highway patrol and county sheriff's department miraculously appeared for the first time during the marching.

From that point on, they were visible throughout the march and monitored on a special channel, our c.b. stations that we had in two of the support vehicles that accompanied the marchers. This trek goes down now as the longest in history for human rights for a total of 168 miles. Some of our ministers from the Northeast District and their people got together and provided a support vehicle and also supplied transportation for the Rev. Karen Ziegler, the Rev. Shelley Hamilton and the Rev. Ed Hougen and a few of their members to join the trekkers in Jacksonville. There were some who walked the entire 168 miles. I looked at blistered, cracked and bleeding feet and at people who were sun burned and yet smiling -- people who were

determined to march into a red-necked Southern city with a smile and the love of Jesus Christ on their faces no matter what was said to them.

The overwhelming sense of history I think really hit me as we began to approach Tallahassee and our black brothers and sisters came out in every form of transportation they could find to honk horns and wave at us and encourage us to continue in our march for our gay rights. There were flashes of the pain, of the agony and the martyrs that they had had to sacrifice in order to attain the very small satisfaction of human rights that they had been given. But how very grateful we all were to them for their support.

As we marched into the city limits of Tallahassee, of course we were "unwelcomed" by the Rev. Sutek, who appeared utterly ridiculous on top of a car and wearing a three-piece brown suit with a pulpit size Bible, screaming at the top of his lungs in his hate-filled voice that we were abominations unto the Lord and that we were "unwelcomed." We continued to march past him singing, "Jesus Loves Me, This I know" which seemed to unnerve him considerably. There were other threats of violence and as the marchers who camped out that night (some went on into Tallahassee to hotel rooms to get a good night's sleep) pulled around their campsite, there were truckers that arrived again and they were symbolically pelted with eggs which was supposed to be their stoning. Thank God for the sense of humor that we have learned even in the face of adversity, because Sunday after worship service, the marchers marched with empty egg cartons in the hopes that if eggs were thrown at them again, they might be able to catch a few and have them for an after worship service breakfast, but there were no more incidents until the time came for the rally on the steps of city hall in Tallahassee.

It was beautiful to see so many gay sisters and brothers come out -- people who were not even members of MCC, but who were in total support of MCC's right to remain in Tallahassee regardless of the seven months of harassment given to Mr. Bob Angell and the MCC congregation there.

Many people spoke eloquently, many people sang eloquently, but the testimony that was seen and felt by everyone, including the police department of Tallahassee was



Determined to be able to worship, trekkers walk for our rights. march to Tallahassee.

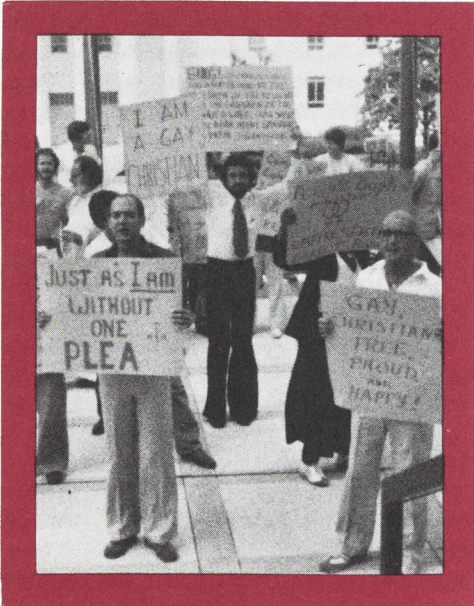
Troy Perry joins the

that we had come there asking for our human rights with dignity and with love while Sutek's group arrived, particularly after seeing the CBS program "Gay Politics/Gay Power" the night before, filled with violent hate and rhetoric to make the blood boil in anyone.

People continued to shout at us, to tell us that Jesus would not listen to us, to tell us that Jesus did not love us and we continued to sing to them that He did indeed and that we had victory in Jesus. The thing that seemed to blow them away the most was when we finally sang, "Amazing Grace" and they couldn't deal with that. Their shouts increased to a crescendo, almost deafening, but the louder they shouted the louder we sang.

We left there knowing that we had been a part of a history, most certainly history in southern Florida, as many people had come forward and been a part of a rally for their rights for the first time. A lesbian caucus was begun in that city for the first time and a gay task force for that city was started and people were standing there unafraid to declare to the city of Tallahassee and the state of Florida who they were and what they were demanding as human beings.

As we prepared to leave the church later that afternoon after everything that had been planned was accomplished, Sutek drove past the church screaming, "You'll burn, faggots, you'll burn." And all that I could think of is, if we do burn it will be from your bombs in our churches, but the flames of hell will not touch us because we serve a loving God who has heard our pleas and knows our hearts.



Marchers on the steps of the Capitol Building in Tallahassee.

THE TREK

intro duction

By Rev. Shelley Hamilton

Human beings form our ideas, attitudes, and beliefs out of experience. The experience is sometimes individual and on a personal level; sometimes it is societal and is vicarious. We are influenced on all levels of our beings by the experiences of all other peoples in history. The records of history and the development of theological thought obviously evolved out of direct and living experience. It seems certain to me that the beginnings of formal doctrine and dogma arose out of a need and intention to tell other people about God and even more about a particular experience of God that they might understand and share that experience. I doubt that the first Christians in their earliest attempts at writing were attempting to force theoretical and dogmatic creeds about God and Christ onto the rest of the world. It seems more realistic to assume that what was indeed happening among people was an organized effort to record a sequence of events and to state the effect of those events on the world. The task of the first Christians was to offer an intelligent presentation of all information given by individual Christian experience and to interpret its significance with whatever tools of understanding were available.

Scripture clearly indicates that the Israelite peoples' belief in God was not determined by theism but on recognizing God's presence in actual and concrete events within the realm of human history. The Hebrew people believed in God

because of their experience of God acting in their lives. Through their experience of the Exodus they could proclaim God Savior. The Exodus experience was one of redemption and it was through this experience of redemption that the Hebrew people came to believe that God is in fact God, God is the God of all peoples and God is the creator of all things. Out of the experience of God's redeeming direction in their lives it was possible for them to come to understandings about their lives, their beginnings, and the reason and outcome of the world under God.

The Exodus was the central point of experience which created a biblical theology for the Hebrews. That's clear. It is also clear that the resurrection was the focal and decisive event in which God acted as revealed in the New Testament. Scripture also reveals that Christian faith did not rest on logical deductions or on the memory of a martyred leader. Early Christianity, in all its power and beauty, was a religion of very present experience and certainly a hope that was strongly oriented in the future. Regardless of where any Christian is coming from theologically, I would risk an assumption that no one can deny that the experience of the resurrection was the beginning of Christianity and on it were founded the doctrines of the church. (I Corinthians 15:3-8, 14, 17; II Corinthians 4:8-15).

Theology, therefore, calls itself into being out of human experience in relationship with God. In the stories, poems, songs, parables, and histories transcribed in the Bible and in successive declarations of inspired testimony to God, we find definite theological affirmations utilized as records of experience. The Gospels are a record of experience interpreted theologically and are only one portion of a continuing experience of the Christian community which began at Pentecost and continues

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continued from page 5

through the present. Using the Gospel writers method, later Christians continued to reflect on their experience of the Grace of God in their changing historical situations. In this way gradual intellectual presentations of the significance of their beliefs began to be formulated into permanence. The early church creeds were essentially interpretation of scripture which were transcripts of human encounters (experiences) with God in Christ.

I say all of this by way of justifying the method by which I choose to write this article. I want to write about the Incarnation. The mystery of the Incarnation. I am a preacher and I am inclined to write in much the same way I speak. It has been said that this is not an appropriate method for writing about theology. I am not convinced that Barth's method of doing theology was appropriate simply because most people are not privileged enough to have had the benefit of the kind of education that makes understanding Barth possible. Theology is for The People. If the method that theologians use makes their material unaccessible to the people then their method is unacceptable. I understand that the words we use to talk about whatever we talk about are extremely important. Words are important because they are symbols which create images inside our minds and those pictures in our minds determine what we believe and how we act.

I learned a long time ago that I cannot preach out of another's experience nor can I attempt to write or reflect theologically utilizing another's method. I want to briefly tell a story. It's factual. The experience of that story as it happened, in relationship, with other people, has changed my life and has given me a deeper understanding of the Incarnation. I need to write about that experience in this context both because I think it's important to do so and also because I think it was a profound theological statement that is relevant to the work I've been doing this semester. The experience told me something certain about Jesus and many uncertain things about myself and my denomination; for me the Church. It is without doubt a theological story and I have faith that its content will justify the method. One final plea for understanding - I do not believe that anyone has ever become a Christian through reading Barth or Tillich. Rather it is through an experience of Christ that brings people into the faith.



Trekking "take five" during march.

the florida trek

It was Saturday morning in Jacksonville, Florida. The date was April 18, 1980 and the time was 8 a.m. A group of people were gathered in a circle. A group of Lesbians and Gay men. All of us were Christians. A little band of queers. Twenty-seven of us in all. We were gathered around a small table arranged as an altar and set for Communion. We held hands, we laughed and we sang. We are all members of The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, an ecumenical Christian denomination with a special ministry to the Gay community. We were clergy and lay, women and men, old and young, black and white. We had all come to Florida in response to an appeal from our sisters and brothers in the Southeast District to join them in a walk from Jacksonville, FL to Tallahassee, the capital of Florida. The purpose of the march was for us to make a witness, a witness to our Christianity and to our Gayness. A walk to witness to the world of our freedom as Gay people in Christ Jesus: The Word made flesh.

It was raining softly as we prepared for communion. I was celebrating. I remember that service clearly. I was deeply filled with the Holy Spirit and so were the people around me. All around me. The energy around us felt electric. I asked people to join me in prayer. Heads bowed,

eyes closed, faces concentrated. I prayed with my eyes open, my hands raised outwards and upwards towards the energy of the cosmos into the soul of God. I watched the faces of my people as I prayed. We were a beautiful and a holy people. A royal nation. Each of us were the same and yet each of us were radically different. I knew as I prayed that we were doing something that would shift the direction of our denomination and perhaps, if we were faithful, the world. I knew that God was with us and that transfiguration was about to begin.

I read from the Gospel of John. "Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall never be thirsty . . . In truth, in very truth I tell you, the believer possesses eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your parents ate the manna in the desert and they are dead. I am speaking of the bread that comes down from heaven which a person may eat and never die. I am that living bread which has come down from heaven; if anyone eats this bread they shall live forever. Moreover, the bread which I give is my own flesh; I give it for the life of the world.' " (I was to recall this scripture many times during the next week.) I prayed and then spoke the words of institution. "This is my body . . . broken, given for you, for the life of the world . . . This is my blood . . . shed for you, for the life of the world . . . As often as you do this . . ." As I spoke those ancient words my eyes were closed and I could feel the rain falling on my face. It was cool and gentle and I felt that we were experiencing a baptism. As a people of God I felt that we were being cleansed

and anointed for our journey.

(It is not within the scope of this paper to give a daily and detailed account of all that happened to us on that seven day trek. That must wait for our historians. I want to speak mostly of the dynamics that flowed between and among us for it is that energy which shaped the trek. I want to speak specifically in a very general way highlighting struggles and controversies in order to lead into my own theological interpretation of the Incarnation which emerged out of this very physical experience.)

The first day was wet. It rained most of the day and blisters developed very early. The day was filled with all kinds of intensity. There was a mixture of laughter, occasional anger, fear, apprehension, anticipation and the first indications of grueling physical and emotional pain to soon follow. Every day after that was characterized by conflict, dissension and pain. It is remarkable that out of all the confusion and dissension there emerged some of the most amazing experiences of love that I have ever witnessed and been a part of.

There is absolutely no doubt that each person there was there because they had to be. We were there because each of us had a vision and a sense of certainty that God had called us all together to experience God and each other in a very incarnational way. By the second day it was glaringly apparent that among us were radically opposing ways of living and speaking the Gospel. We soon came to an understanding that the cultural and geographical differences among us separated us in very real ways. Our ways of acting and being in the world were very different. The theological, cultural, and geographical contrasts among us, of course, shaped the empirical theological direction of the Trek.

We were a divided group from the first day. It is important to note that we began this trek with excitement and conviction that God had brought us together to share and dialogue precisely about those very differences which created such stumbling blocks between us. We talked. We cried - all of us - a lot. Some of us got angry and shouted. Some of us were peace makers. Blessed are the peace makers. Some of us smiled sweetly in the face of anything . . . a sweetness that disturbed me and strangely sickened me.

By the close of the first day tensions and tempers were already flaring and it was obvious that some of us were physically fit for the walk and that others were not. Some people rode in the support vehicles

from the first day onward. The journey was fascinating. It was enlightening to observe our people at break and meal times. The physical way in which some of us ministered to ourselves and others said something profoundly theological to me. We touched and rubbed each other's bodies. Some of us massaged lotion and oil on each other's feet and faces. We rubbed cool water on each others faces and necks, we kissed each other and gazed deeply into each other's souls. I think almost immediately some of us realized that we needed each other to survive and so we loved intensely and in very different ways normal for most of us. Women and women, men and men, women and men. Many of us ministered with love and tenderness and many of us remained closed to that healing love.

One of the major controversies that confronted us on a daily basis was that some of us at the close of each day's walk drove back into the city to rest, take hot showers, but mainly to take care of each other and not be vulnerable to attack by the forces in that area who obviously did not want us there. Half of the group camped out overnight at camp grounds and various other places. A lot of deep feelings, hostility and resentment regularly emerged over this issue. There was definite implications from the campers that the city folks were not being faithful. It was said that God would provide and that there was no reason for fear. The city folks felt that they were being good stewards. We felt that God would heal us and care for us only if we provided that healing and caring for ourselves. We felt that hot showers and foot soaking and physically caring for ourselves would be impossible under the camp-out situation and realizing the grueling conditions under which we had to walk every day we knew in order to do what we had to do it required that we be able to sleep and care for our bodies properly at night. We were concerned, deeply concerned about the lack of security precautions and the lack of wide-awake and alert guards at night. This issue arose time and again in very different ways.

Day by day I watched an amazing, incredible reality manifest itself. With each passing day some people's physical condition grew stronger and more committed to the actual physical strain of walking 20 to 23 miles every day. For some of us the drudgery stopped and it became a deep source of joy and amazement to us as we witnessed in ourselves the wonder of our own bodies and how good the physical exertion made us feel. It struck me with

force that one of the things that was allowing this incredible surge of healing and strength to take place was the love that was flowing in and out of us.

It is with love and misgiving that I add to this that it also struck me with lucidity that many people were really suffering. I could not help noting that many of us had no understanding of our bodies, that many of us had not dealt realistically with the physical nature of what we were doing. So many were hung up on the Lord and what he (sic) would do for us all. If one followed that kind of thinking to its logical conclusion one might ask why some of us were healed of our blisters and pulled muscles, and strained ligaments and some of us were not. One might ask, "Who is faithful and who is not?" But a more relevant observation might be that some of us understood the Gospel to say something about our bodies being temples of God and understanding that the implication of that for us is powerful. How we treat the home of our spirit and God's spirit affects the way we physically live in the world.

It seemed to me that many of us were negating the importance of bodies not being able to endure the physical strain of the heat and the walk. Those of us who did not ride in the support vehicles were said to be prideful because we would not ride and rest as others did. Many of us had no need to do that. I know that for those of us who watched our bodies heal over night - I don't mean miraculous cure, but healed enough, the pain abated enough to walk another day. I know also that that healing occurred because we loved each other. We touched and held each other and prayed for and with each other. I remember one night in particular a brother had a blood blister on his heel that was so bad he was nearly crying, afraid that he would not be able to walk the next day. Someone drained his blister, someone else massaged his foot and I fixed him some hot epsom salts to soak his feet in. We all prayed. He walked the next day.

mystery of incar nation

Everything I've said before I've said in an effort to justify the simple observations that come to me about Jesus and what I think the Incarnation is all about. I do not
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THE TALLAHASSEE TREK

By Rev. Jos. H. Gilbert

In any official way the Jacksonville-Tallahassee Trek became a fact at the Fall 1979 Southeast District Conference. One of the ministers, then in the District, called for a "March on Tallahassee," asking that it be called for jointly by the Board of Home Missions of the District and by the Florida Task Force. And then two of us who became involved in what came to be called the "Trek" invited others to join that effort by walking from Jacksonville to Tallahassee as a spiritual exercise.

Early in December a planning meeting was held in response to the call by the SED Board of Home Missions and the FTF and a date was set . . . April 27th. At the same time some of us indicated that we would be walking from Saturday, April 19 through Saturday, April 26. And we invited others to 1) Pray for us, 2) Fast for us, 3) Contribute to the costs, and 4) Walk with us. The purposes were to witness to the larger community about Gay and Lesbian Spirituality, to witness to the Gay community about that same Spirituality, to witness that North Florida was not so homophobic as those who pretend to speak for it may claim. We would be walking because Scripture tells us that the intensity of our desire has an effect upon the power of our prayers. As we would act out our commitment to what we ask we would find assurance of God's answer, but also experience the personal liberation that only God's own Self can grant to us.

The Elders endorsed both the March and the Trek. Some money came from a Dade County, Florida businessman and a human rights organization in the same county. One of us printed up large numbers of posters and flyers and also a form inviting prayer and fasting. These were sent out all over the Fellowship.

Some of us responded from all sorts of places. We came from Dayton and Columbus in Ohio; from Boston and Worcester in Massachusetts; from Albany and New York in that state; from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; from Princeton, New Jersey; and from almost every MCC in the State of Florida.

We began arriving in Jacksonville on Friday, April 18. Some of us were not sure

that we could actually make the Trek. There were questions about security, support systems, questions about prudence versus recklessness, about Faith versus Faithlessness. For some of us, to Trek or not to Trek was still an open question. Some of us asked for a Friday night meeting. Some of us didn't want a meeting, but only an opportunity to dialogue. A time was set for dialogue, but not everyone had arrived yet so there was very little talk . . . just some very nervous chatter as we faced the possibility that we could not come together in one body.

But Saturday morning we gathered for Communion, stepping out in one accord knowing that we would talk as we walk and would have some sort of meeting at noon.

One of the issues that separates some of us from some of us is whether or not it is responsible to camp out along the way. Some of us decide that that is part of our witness and a part of the experience and that we can not only walk among the people of North Florida, but sleep there as well. Others of us decide that we can sleep in Jacksonville for a few nights and then in Tallahassee. But we find a fragile unity in deciding to permit brothers and sisters to occupy different spaces. What I do you do not have to do. What you do I do not have to do.

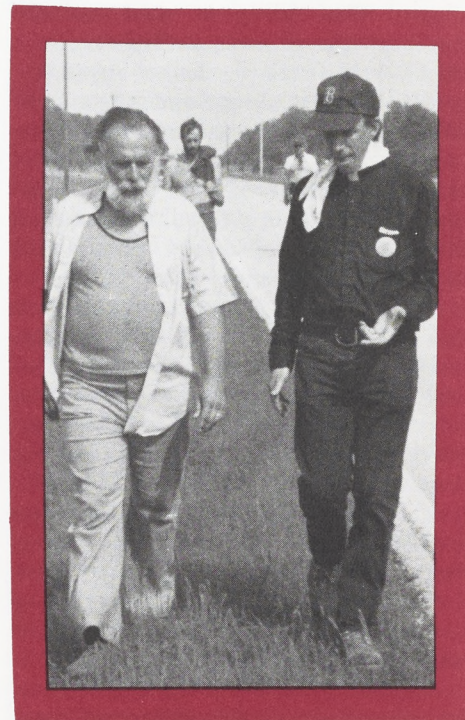
And so we walk. It rains the first day. Wet shoes take a huge and costly toll of feet over the next few days. Toward the end of the first day the sun comes out and we pull into our campsite to share the evening meal before separating for the night. All of a sudden it pours down rain again and we all go into Jacksonville for the night.

Sunday, our second day, a hard day because feet are blistered. And then at 4 p.m. we stop and bus into Jacksonville for the dinner given to honor us and the new pastor, and for the installation of that pastor into his new pulpit. After service some of us leave for the camp ground. We have been seen on television, and the owners say, "W'all saw you on TV. Y'all welcome back."

Monday, our third day, maybe even harder than the day before. Feet are bad, muscles are strained and have not loosened up as yet. Some of us know all about

things like potassium and have come prepared. Some of us do not.

And we become aware that animals come to us . . . everywhere. A white turkey dialogues with one of us, a cow with another, and even the horses dance for us. A Sergeant in the Columbia County Sheriff's Office greets us at the County Line. We know that he is there for security reasons. He never mentions that, but only says, "I have come to offer you hospitality." He shakes hands with everyone, poses with some, offers to get some extra mayonnaise. And we, we have begun to expunge words like 'reckless' and 'faithless' from our vocabularies. At the end of the day some of us return to Jacksonville, some of us go to a campground in Lake City. One of us meets two beautiful older Baptist ladies. They have been 'friends' since 1954. They talk about their church, their dog, the mother of one of them. And our sister begins to talk about 'our' church. They back off when they hear the word 'gay'. One of us later asks, "Do you suppose they even know that they are gay? They may only know that they love each other." In the morning they keep their heads turned.



There were times to share during the long walk. (Trek photos by Rev. Rickie Richards and Rev. Susan Kliebenstein.)

It is Tuesday, our fourth day. A little easier than other days possibly. Our bodies are beginning to see what is happening as use instead of abuse. Some talking is going on. Some of us talk about what separates us, what unites us. We have such different faith structures that some of us don't recognize certain actions or words as prayer. Some of us don't recognize certain actions or words as spiritual. We talk about "Who is Jesus, really?" We talk a bit about "What is Scripture, what is Revelation?" It is very scary and some of us retreat into talking about whether some of us are being too reckless, whether some of us are showing a lack of faith. A Greyhound bus stops and lets people off to join us. One of them is the 14 year old son of a Gay woman. Morale is high when the Worship Coordinator of Tallahassee walks five miles toward us bearing water to quench our thirst, oil to heal us, a Word to illumine us and a song to bring joy to our hearts. At the end of the day some of us go into Jacksonville to sleep, some of us go to a state park on the Suwannee River, where the mosquitoes are very thick . . . but it is so beautiful. The camper-outers talk a bit about whether or not the use of oppressive language is redeemable.

Wednesday, our fifth day, everyone is tired, bodies are in better shape. The press comes out to meet us from Tallahassee. There are a lot of words, but we don't talk about things of consequence. Some of us do a bit of venting, most of it pretty rational . . . but not all. It begins to be obvious that there are two Treks going on. The first temptation is to believe that some of us from one region make up one Trek, others of us from another region make up another. But the reality is that each of us is on two Treks. One is the official Trek, the declared intention for a group to walk from Jacksonville to Tallahassee, a Spiritual exercise with profound political ramifications. The other, a personal Trek, a desperate (one of us actually uses the word) search for kinship and meaning, a Spiritual exercise with profound I-Thou ramifications. It was to have been a long day, more mileage than previously but we stop 3.2 miles short of our goal near the Church of Corinth. A magnificent meal comes out from Tallahassee, and the mother of one of the Trekkers brings even more food. Some of us bus into Tallahassee for the first time to sleep, others go to a campground in the next county, which is Jefferson. The people generally continue to be courteous. Black people unfailingly so.

Thursday, our sixth day. The morning

paper has a beautiful picture of us eating supper . . . with the mother of the Trekker standing in our midst. What a way of coming out as a parent of a Gay person in North Florida. The story indicates that a Baptist minister in Tallahassee is unwilling to exhort non-violence on his flock, and that the Sheriff of Madison County does not want us on his turf, in his county. We walk and we seem to be talking a bit more. Some of us wonder if some others of us are too 'works' conscious for wanting to walk every step of the way. Some of us wonder if some others of us are too 'works' conscious for wanting the Trek to continue to the end in Tallahassee. We make up some of the lost mileage and then go on to a campground in Madison County to eat our evening meal. Out of nowhere comes some verbal abuse and a promise, a threatening promise, "We'll be back tonight." Fear. Another car comes through the campground, "You are all going to burn and go to hell." It is obvious that the owners of the ground cannot possibly keep intruders out. Some of the cars leave for Tallahassee, we call the Florida Highway Patrol, they refer us to the Sheriff. We call the Sheriff, who promises assistance. No one comes. Fear. We talk to Tallahassee, but we decide that we will not cross over into Tallahassee until we walk in. And we resolve that this time it will not take God's people 40 years to arrive at a destination. And so we go to find a new campground near Perry, Florida. A familiar name. We feel safe, but post guards. Some of us say "Lord, we are not afraid, help our fear." We don't even tell folks in Tallahassee exactly where we are because we think the phones may be bugged. During the night some of us talk to Los Angeles, some to Washington, D.C., and calls begin going out to sisters and brothers all over the fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches . . . the Trekkers may be in trouble. But today we celebrate the fact that the Trek has now come further than any other Gay/Christian Trek in history. No one can take that from us.

Friday, our seventh day. The morning paper reports that the camp site was pulled into Tallahassee. Not so, but the supposition may have been part of the safety. It reports that the Sheriff of Madison County doesn't want us in his county either. It reports that we will be met at the city limits of Monticello, County seat, with a petition asking that we go around. We are told by some of us that we have been asked not to enter Monticello until some of the Elders arrive. Some of us have decided not to wait, not to wait to start, not to

wait to go through Monticello. Those of us are anointed and encircled . . . acts of empowerment. Others of us have decided not to start until the Elders arrive. The latter want to talk, the previous can only talk with their feet at this point.

We begin to walk and then check with the Chief of Police in Monticello who is unfailingly courteous and promises that nothing will happen to us there. Those of us who have decided to walk do so . . . up the left side of the road. Those who have decided not to walk yet ride on the right side of the road. What a gap. But the positive energy quickly becomes apparent. Some seem to be saying, "I do not believe in what you seem to be saying, what you are doing, I certainly cannot join you in it . . . but I will be personally supportive of your personhood." That continues for three blissful, painful, spiritual miles. And then comes a rest stop. "Let's have a meeting." After half an hour some of us begin to walk and some continue in the meeting. Several new people arrive and begin to walk. And we become aware that our whole fellowship has been at prayer and fasting . . . at one accord . . . on our behalf. Total. Others who had continued in the meeting now begin to walk. We walk back to meet them and then together retrace the steps of the Trek . . . not very far it is true, but every step hurts. Those who have not yet walked this day decide to go into town and meet the Elders. "We will be back," they say. And we walk. Someone is egged just outside Monticello. But Monticello is beautiful. Black people everywhere wave to us. Sometimes they look to see if white overseers are watching, but still they wave. One beautiful black woman comes out to bless us. Only one bad moment. One man on the Courthouse steps makes a gesture to one of the women and says, "Boy, do I have something to cure you." But the Chief of Police is ahead of us, a carload of his troopers behind us. (Yes, he speaks very possessively also.) We come to the far side of town and sing to a very embarrassed police force to the tune "Love Lifted Me" . . . "Thank you very much, thank you very much, when nobody else would help, you helped us through."

Somewhere along the way a dog joins us and will not turn back. His name is now 'Trekker.' We continue to walk. We begin to see State Troopers, the first for a couple of days. We don't know it yet but telegrams have been pouring into Tallahassee from MCCs, from whole states and even Districts, from the Mayor of Washington, D.C., from the City Council of Los Angeles,

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white house conference

On April 28, 1980, forty people, representing 23 religious organizations that are concerned with the rights and needs of lesbians and gay men, met with Dr. Robert L. Maddox, religious liaison to the President of the United States.

The purpose of the White House meeting was to acquaint Dr. Maddox, a Southern Baptist minister from Georgia, with the existence of a pervasive lesbian and gay religious community. Dr. Maddox had previously met with Bob Jones III, of Bob Jones University, and other fundamentalists and representatives of the "Washington for Jesus" March. The Washington Field Office of the UFMCC

and Dignity International cooperated in organizing the meeting. Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, Adam DeBaugh and Ken Spaatz represented the UFMCC at the White House.

The meeting lasted two hours, during which twenty-three persons testified to Dr. Maddox of the struggle of lesbians and gay men; of the need to preserve religious freedom; and the concerns of gay and non-gay religious people for the rights of twenty million Americans. Many speakers reinforced the need to do away with oppressive immigration laws, and the need for an Executive order from the President banning discrimination in the Federal

Government.

Dr. Maddox said that he was stunned at the size and strength of the delegation and was impressed with the "articulateness" and "preparedness" and assured them that they had "blown (his) stereotypes." He confided his own personal struggles with homophobia, and told the delegation that they impressed him more favorably than the Bob Jones delegation. Maddox did not, however (as was expected, despite his glowing remarks) give the delegation any hope of improved immigration laws or a forthcoming executive order.

After the meeting, most of the delegation met for several hours to prepare a press release on the White House meeting, and to discuss the future of "gay ecumenism." Six persons volunteered (Joan Clark, Bill Johnson, James Tinney, Nancy Wilson, Frank Scheuren and San Rodgers) to be a steering committee to explore a national gay ecumenical gathering to be facilitated through the National Council of Community Churches in Christ.

Washington for Jesus

A First Person Account

It was a strange morning, the morning of the 29th of April. I really did not want to get out of bed, I did not want to face the challenge of the day. For me that challenge was to participate in the Washington for Jesus rally on the Mall. I knew and had known for several months that I had to be there and I had to be there to make a witness as a Gay Christian.

We walked, about 13 of us, from the church to the mall, with our signs of witness, "The Lord is my Shepherd and He Knows I'm Gay," "I Am a Lesbian, and Jesus is My Lord."

People stared, took pictures and made comments about the 'Homos and the Queers.' There were cries of How Dare You in the Name of Jesus, and You are Going to Hell. We circled the huge crowd of some 100,000 persons and then entered into the midst of it. At the point of stopping I was at once attacked by a very hostile man who was intent upon removing my sign. As we engaged in some rather heated conversation, on his part at least, there appeared a young man who placed

himself between the hostile man and myself. This young man made of himself a 'buffer zone' and would not allow the hostile man to get closer to me nor would he allow the man to continue yelling, rather his presence brought a kind of peace. I did not know what his own particular position was with regard to our witness, but it was clear he thought we should be guarded and protected and that he thought he should provide that kind of protection.

Concurrent with this event another young man jumped into my face, and I mean jumped into my face, and yelled, "You are going to hell." His finger pointed into my eyes, he yelled this repeatedly and with rage. My response was, "I am a Christian and Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior." With that he departed.

Seeing that the man who had his hand on my sign was still holding forth with his attempt to remove it and the young man who was my guardian remained between us, it appeared that we had a real stalemate. Several marshals from the rally appeared and told me that I was not welcome with my sign and that I had to remove it if I stayed. I only replied that to remove my sign would be to deny myself

and my Lord and that I could not do. I offered to move to another place so as to calm the man who would not let go of my sign. This we did, moving about 25 yards away. Of course, the hostile man followed.

The next scenario was a most interesting and strange one. Within seconds it seemed that our little band was surrounded by a huge ring of praying 'christians.'

At once there were hands all over me casting forth demons and spirits and all manner of evils. I felt a great calm over me and a stillness within. Again another man, this time with a Bible, appeared before me and with much anger began to quote to me the text from Romans 1 and denounce my sexuality and my lifestyle along with my faith. Again there came this gentle young man who had protected me earlier and again he stood very close to me, not speaking, but just letting me know that he would not allow any harm to me.

For the next hour or so each member of our group was cut off from the others yet all of us were within the circle. Each of us were being prayed over, read to, or yelled at. All at once there was shouting in my ears, "I curse you in the name of Jesus." I turned to see a young man about 19 yelling at me with both rage and fear in his face and I replied, "You cannot curse in the name of Jesus." He said, "Jesus curses

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A Pentecostal statement

By James S. Tinney, Ph.D.

Presented at a press conference conducted by the April Alliance on Tuesday, April 29, 1980, at the Methodist Building, Washington, D.C. on the occasion of the "Washington for Jesus" march and rally.

As a political scientist who teaches at Howard University and a Pentecostal theologian in the Church of God in Christ, I am alarmed at the threat to human rights and religious freedom which is posed by the "Washington for Jesus" rally and march. What many do not realize is that this event represents but the tip of an iceberg of an underground plot to turn the power levers of this country over to right-wing conservative forces who are opponents of every progressive move this nation has made toward equality and civil rights.

As an "insider" in this evangelical-charismatic-Pentecostal faith, I have been aware of the hidden agenda which started several years ago. It is an agenda forged by interlocking directorates of more than 10 fundamentalist political lobbying groups, all of whom would like to keep their interconnections unknown. As early as 1974 a secret meeting of key individuals was held here in Washington for the purpose of seizing political power for white fundamentalists with a target year of 1980. It was also that year that the book, *One Nation Under God* was published by this secret committee -- the same name now used by the political lobby of John Jimenez, the director of the "Washington for Jesus" movement.

That group set the agenda for efforts to unseat 50 liberal and Black congresspersons, to form Bible study groups in homes in each congressional district (purportedly for prayer, but actually for political organizing), to purchase former Archbishop William Baum's home for a Christian Embassy (whose funding board still remains largely unknown), and to organize political campaigns to deny homosexual teachers jobs, prevent the Internal Revenue Service from investigating private white church-related academies, reestablish a House Un-American Activities Committee, sponsor Proposition 6 type referenda abolishing use of public funds for social programs and welfare for the poor, conduct a 1976 "I Found It" crusade

replete with bumper stickers, and the present rally/march in 1980.

What all this amounts to is a highly orchestrated move to bring this country to fascist rule which would make even Hitler's Germany and South Africa seem mild by comparison.

As a Pentecostal I wish to firmly say that I believe in salvation, but not the kind of salvation that:

- * saves private schools for white folks;
- * saves money donated to evangelism for political diversion;
- * saves seats in congress for conservatives, while kicking out more than 50 other congresspersons;
- * saves America for anti-communists, John Birch Society members, and segregated school academies;
- * and saves only white, Anglo-saxon Protestants who vote the Reagan ticket, while condemning Jews, Muslims, and homosexuals to hell.

I also believe in sanctification, but not the kind that:

- * sanctifies war, instead of peace, in the name of saving democracy;
- * sanctifies prejudice, hatred, and intolerance in the name of one who taught us to love one another;
- * and sanctifies racism, classism, sexism, ageism, and homophobia, in the name of God and the church.

As a Pentecostal, I also believe in the Holy Ghost, but not

- * a spirit of health, wealth and prosperity which causes the sick and the poor to blame themselves for their misfortunes;
- * a spirit of self-righteousness which would set itself up as having the sole, exclusive right to call itself Christian or even charismatic;
- * a spirit of holy pride which seeks to display its religious vanity by forcing children of other faiths to sit in silence in a classroom while others take time to say prayers they should have taken time to pray at home;
- * or a spirit of evangelism which calls the Third World pagan, Black cities degenerate, and humanism evil.

Especially I reject the idea that Washington should be for Jesus or Mohammed or Buddha or any other religious figure.

Rather, it should be for all the people of every faith and no faith.

I reject the idea that America needs to "go back to God." The America I know never was "with" God, unless God approved of George Washington owning slaves, Thomas Jefferson throwing one of his mulatto children into the Potomac River, Puritans burning heretics at the stake, and Jim Crow ruling the South.

I reject the idea that millions should come to Washington to pray on the Mall, when the Bible says to stay at home and enter your closet, and pray to God in secret.

I reject the idea that a day has been set aside for repentance, only to discover that it is not *they* who intend to repent, but everybody else who is told to.

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april alliance

On April 29, 1980, the "April Alliance" sponsored by Interchange, in Washington, D.C., held a Press Conference in response to the "Washington for Jesus" March and Rally. The Press Conference spokespersons included James Farmer (civil rights activist), Rev. Chuck Bergstrom (Chair of WISC), Dr. James Tinney (of Howard University), David Eaton (Pastor, All Souls Unitarian/Universalist Church) and Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, of the UFMCC.

The participants attempted to expose the right wing political agenda of the organizers of "Washington for Jesus"; to expose the overt and covert attempts to manipulate Washington's black religious leaders into supporting the March; to uphold the ideals of *plurality* and religious freedom which the organizers of the March seem to want to undermine.

James Farmer closed with the remark, "If the Jesus I know or the Jesus of the social gospel were to look down on the rally, he would probably be compelled to say, 'Thank God I am not a Christian.'"

NOT national operation tune out CBS TUNE OUT DURING THE CRUCIAL SWEEP WEEK OF THE FALL SEASON

A new committee called National Operation Tune Out CBS is calling for a nation-wide tune out of the television station's new Fall season. The boycott of CBS has been called as a result of a Special they aired called "Gay Power/Gay Politics."

The following is taken from a pamphlet being distributed by the committee.

BACKGROUND

On Saturday, April 26, 1980, from 10:00 - 11:00 p.m., Los Angeles time, CBS screened nationally a major television show produced by George Crile and Grace Deikhaus, called "Gay Power/Gay Politics."

HISTORY

The CBS news team spent approximately ten (10) months in the San Francisco Gay and Lesbian community, shooting many thousands of feet of film, interviewing numerous political figures, attending a wide variety of events and recording a broad-based multi-faceted community, comprised of men and women from all walks of life and from all races. What the national viewing audience saw was in no way representative of that broad spectrum.

REACTION TO THE PROGRAM

There was immediate and angry reaction from Lesbians and Gay men from all over the country. The universal response has been that CBS *deliberately* presented a derogatory, inflammatory, irresponsible show.

The following summarizes the thinking of the Lesbian and Gay community nation-wide:

WE ACCUSE CBS of yellow journalism of the most dangerous kind. If even one member of our national community is

a victim of violence because of this show, we hold CBS responsible as the attacker, and it is CBS who should stand trial.

WE ACCUSE CBS of deliberately ignoring the title of its own show, "Gay Power/Gay Politics." Excessive camera time was spent on extraneous matters, carefully designed to sensationalize gay male life, with the explicit intent of provoking misunderstanding, fear, and hostility, and perpetuating nonacceptance of our community.

WE ACCUSE CBS of selective editing. Thousands of feet of film were edited out to deliberately concentrate on a very limited segment of the community, to create a sensational program, for reasons known only to CBS. Through this highly selective editing, CBS distorted the truth and presented a very narrow, exploitive view of our community.

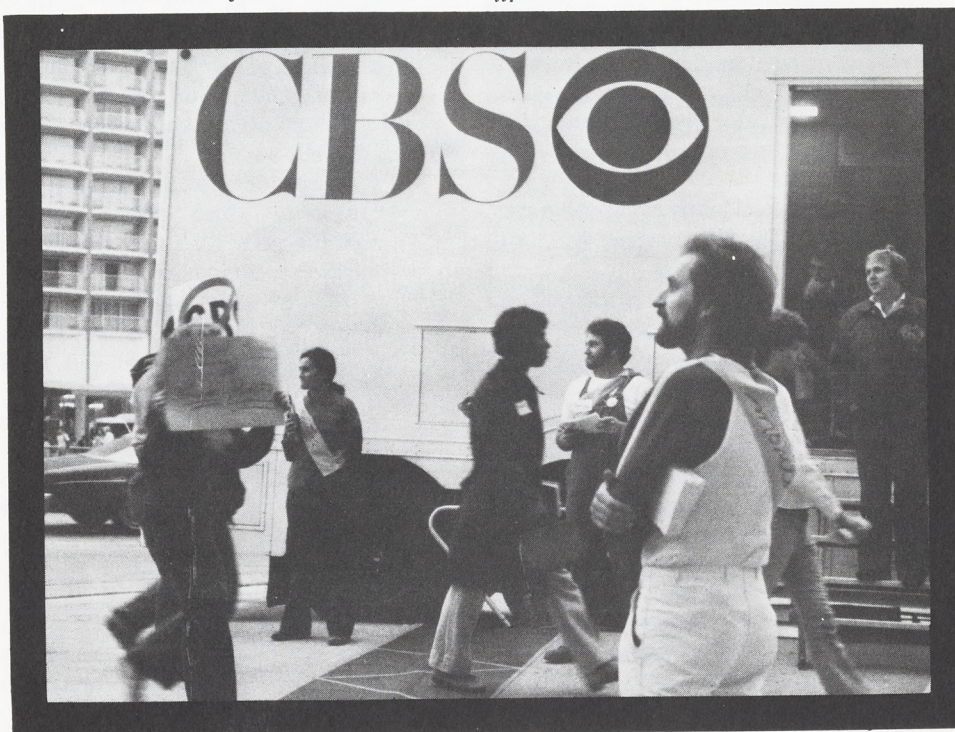
WE ACCUSE CBS of sexism and racism. The program was sexist and racist in its most conspicuous exclusion of women and people of color.

WE ACCUSE CBS of a blatant attempt to discredit nationally our Gay and Lesbian political leaders.

WE ACCUSE CBS of a planned attempt to discredit the Gay and Lesbian movement, at precisely the time in history when we are indeed making some significant gains -- when we are beginning to achieve societal respect and understanding, and are developing a united sense within our community.

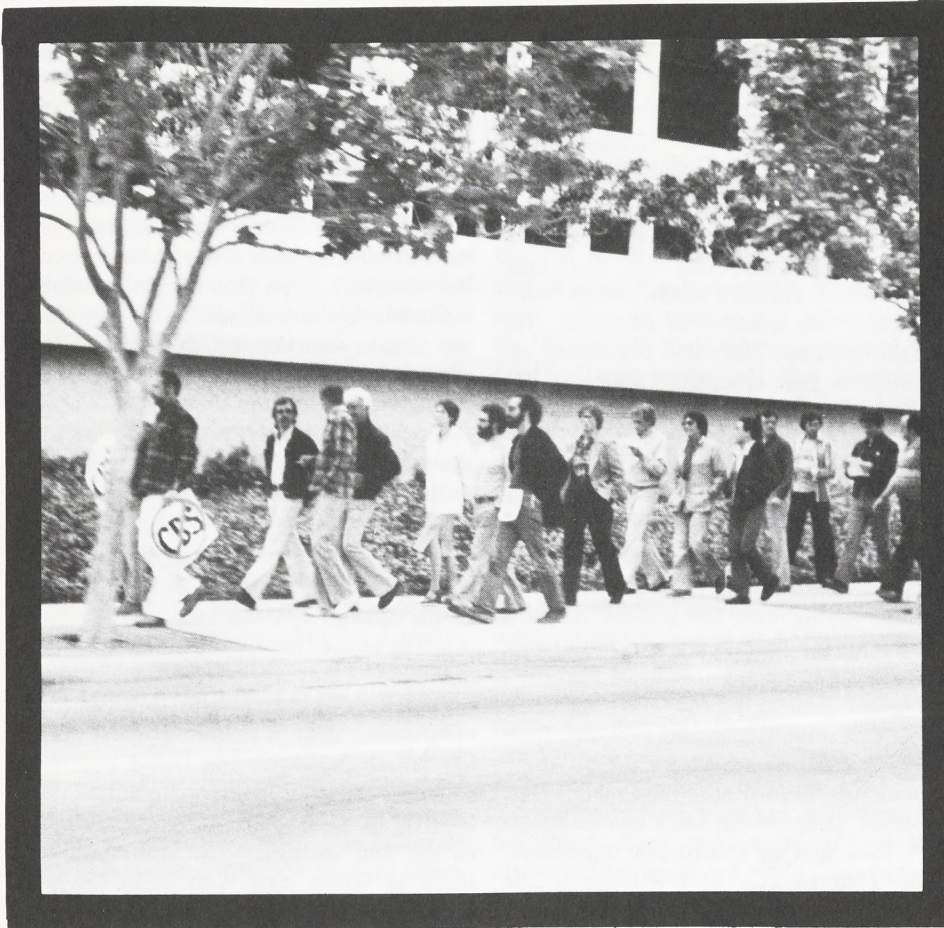
WE ACCUSE CBS of making a call for genocide of our movement. Note this quote from the epilogue of the show:

"The right of Gays to organize, like any other minority, for their interest is no longer in question. But what will those interests be? A demand for absolute sexual freedom . . . ? Will this challenge to traditional values provoke far more hostility and controversy when put to the test elsewhere? It is no longer a question of whether Gays will achieve political power, but what they will attempt to do with it."



Lesbians and Gay men demonstrate against CBS after the showing of "Gay Power/Gay Politics." (Photos by T. Earlye Scott)

During a CBS convention of network executives and affiliates, Lesbians and Gay men in Los Angeles demonstrate asking for equal time.



OUR RESPONSE

The Gay and Lesbian community wonders what *really* motivated those involved in this production?

What are the organizational ties and the personal politics of the show's producers and the CBS personnel responsible for the program?

Is this show part of a conspiracy to discredit and sensationalize our lives and concerns?

Is CBS in violation of any FCC regulations?

Are there grounds for class action suits against CBS and their affiliates?

National Operation Tune-Out CBS. During the entire Sweeps Week of the fall rating season, our community and its friends and supporters, NATIONWIDE, will be mobilized to TUNE-OUT CBS.

DEMANDS

WE DEMAND THAT CBS remove from distribution and prohibit airing of its film

"Gay Power/Gay Politics" in whole or in part, anywhere, at any time, regardless of previous permissions that may have been granted.

WE DEMAND THAT CBS make a public apology to our Lesbian and Gay community and to the individuals in that film whose characters have been slanderized, whose lives have been endangered, and whose careers have potentially been jeopardized.

WE DEMAND THAT CBS exercise its public responsibility, and provide *equal* time, *prime* time, for the airing of a film that honestly portrays the reasons our community *needs* and is *seeking* political power -- showing the struggle a non-accepting society forces us to wage, *simply* to attain equality and justice under the law, which is guaranteed to *all* American citizens -- completely finance and provide all necessary technical support for the making of such a film, to be produced by the Lesbian and Gay community.

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you," and I replied "My Lord does not curse me, my Lord loves me." With that he departed.

During this hour or so I had read to me several scriptures and Romans 1 at least 25 times. Finally, when someone else made their attempt to witness from Romans 1 another man said, "Don't bother to read to him. He already knows what it says." I thanked him for sparing me.

About noon when the rally was supposed to become a parade we decided that we should return to the church. We had made the witness we were called to make, and we did not wish to cause any major confrontation. As we prepared to leave a wonderful thing happened to me. A young woman with many tears in her eyes pushed through the crowd to say she wanted to pray with me. This is not something I felt like doing at that moment after all the prayers for the past two hours. But she was different. She looked at me and said that she was really in pain over all of this hostility we were getting and that she could perceive in her spirit that we were Christians and she said "I know you are a man of God." I let her pray with me and her prayer touched me. She prayed for God's anointing upon me and my ministry, for God's protection and for God's will to be done. She gave thanks that in Christ Jesus we were all one family and that God was the only one who could judge any of us. Her prayer lifted my spirit from the hostile mob into the light of Christ and bathed me in God's love.

We quietly left the mall area and as I did so I turned and there again was the gentle bearded young man who had been to me a guardian angel all day. I went to him and thanked him for his ministry to me. He said that he was grateful for our witness and our presence. I asked him his name and he said, Steven Angel. In the quietness of my soul I believe that indeed God had given him to me as a witness of God's presence and God's love.

The 13 of us returned to the chapel of MCC-DC and did the only thing we could do to sum up our intense feeling, we celebrated the Eucharist on behalf of our entire ministry around the world.

This is a first person witness and account of the events of the Washington for Jesus March on April 29, 1980 by Larry J. Uhrig. Others have their own accounts. This is just mine.

THE POWER OF FAITH

By Rev. Elder Jean White

If you have faith, no bigger even than a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there" and it will move. Nothing will prove impossible for you. Matthew 17:20.

Two elderly sisters who had spent all their lives in a Welsh mining village came home one Sunday from Chapel where they had heard a powerful sermon on the faith that can move mountains. At the back of their cottage there was an enormous slag heap which completely blocked their view and which was a constant irritation. One sister said to the other, "If faith can move mountains, surely if we pray hard enough we can get rid of this horrible slag heap." So, they pulled down the blinds and prayed very hard that the offending blot on the landscape would disappear. When they pulled up the blinds again the monstrosity was still there. "You see," said the older sister, "I knew all the time that it wouldn't move."

We need not feel superior and think that they should have known better, for on the face of it they were doing exactly what Jesus had commanded. Nor should we point out that obviously one at least of the sisters had no faith at all that their prayers would make the slightest difference to the slag heap; but, neither Jesus nor his audience thought for a moment that this saying had anything to do with literally moving tons of earth and stones. Whatever else Jesus was, he was a realist, who did not talk about things that only happen in fairy tales as if they had anything to do with religion. But, he was a master of picturesque illustration, who told people to take the planks out of their own eyes before they started looking for specks in the eyes of their neighbours, who talked to those who were prepared to gulp down a camel but were so fastidious that they would choke over swallowing a midge, or who, in speaking of God's care and concern for each of us, said that God had actually counted the hairs on each of our heads.

By describing things that are impossible or incredible in this way, Jesus arrested the attention of his Palestinian audience and made them think of the essential meaning

behind his exaggeration and over statement. So in this saying it would be quite clear to the listeners that Jesus was not really talking about mountains or, for that matter, about mustard seeds, which were proverbially the smallest of all seeds. He was talking about faith and impressing on the audience that even the tiniest particle of faith could achieve results that are comparable to shifting mountains. In Mark's Gospel, Mark Chapter 11 and Verse 23, the same saying speaks of the power of faith being great enough to enable one to tell a mountain to throw itself into the sea, while in Luke, Chapter 17, Verses 5 and 6, a similar saying uses the illustration of a person with the merest grain of faith being able to tell a mulberry tree to be uprooted and replant itself in the sea.

Moving mountains and planting trees on the bed of the ocean are things which are obviously absurd and impossible. But, says Jesus, people with faith can do things which look just as absurd and impossible. In the 11th chapter of the letter to the Hebrews we find a recital of what the people of Israel were able to accomplish by their faith. But what is faith? Someone complained once that the word faith is a marvellous let out for ministers. When there is something or other in Christian teaching that is difficult to understand, or perhaps when the ministers do not understand it themselves, they tend to say "This is a matter of having faith." As if faith were a magic ingredient which we throw into a mixture of reason, experience, tradition and scripture in order to make sense out of life.

But this is not at all what the author of the letter to the Hebrews says about faith. The author says faith means trusting in God, despite all opposition and dis-

couragement, venturing forward into the unknown future believing that God has a purpose for us and for the world, which in the long run God will accomplish, despite all that the power of evil can do to thwart it. Or, as Kierkegaard puts it, "Faith consists in a man's (sic) lying constantly out upon the deep and with seventy thousand fathoms of water under him." Life is full of uncertainties, peril and hazards, and in such a world the author of Hebrews says to us that the only certainty is Christ. Faith means believing that Christ was right, even if the devil and all the agents keep telling us that Christ was wrong. A German theologian has said this "faith is the assertion of a possibility against all probabilities. Such a faith has nothing else than Jesus Christ in the middle of a world which scoffs at all our hopes and fears." Like St. Paul, we must be prepared to be fools for Christ (1 Corinthians Chapter 4, Verse 10.)

The author of Hebrews in the catalogue in chapter 11 of the Old Testament heroes who had the kind of faith that can move mountains, after mentioning great names like Abraham, Moses and David, lists those nameless heroes who maintained their loyalty to God through hardship, persecution and torture. The author pictures them as taking part with us in the great race of life and together with us looking to Jesus, who has run the same race and reached the goal to which we all strive, eternal life in the presence of God. But, the story by no means ends with the Bible. Christian history highlights names like those of Francis of Assisi, William Booth, Wilberforce, Shaftesbury, Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa, social reformers, campaigners for equality, protectors of the under privileged, who by their faiths have moved mountains of hostility, indifference, antagonism and hatred. It is sure an honour and a privilege to be enrolled in this great pageant of the Church on earth and the Church in Heaven, even if the mountains that we as individuals can remove are merely molehills.

Do you feel called to Europe? We need ministers! Especially in England. We have small groups longing for someone to lead them.

Unfortunately, they cannot afford to support a pastor as yet, so anyone who feels led to apply would have to be prepared to hold down a secular job. Under our immigration laws, nursing and computer technology are the main jobs that can enable people to gain entry to our country. If you feel called to work here for the Lord and are interested, please write to:

Rev. Elder Jean White
C/O BM Box 6303
London WCIV 6XX

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believe that Jesus was God. Jesus was the manifestation of the reality of God's love in the world. I believe that worship of Jesus as the One God is idolatrous. I do not believe that one can substantiate worship of Jesus as God from scripture. Even John's Gospel doesn't call Jesus God. John says, "When all things began, the Word already was. The Word dwelt with God, and what God was, the Word was. The Word then, was with God at the beginning . . ." Also Jesus does not say he is God nor does he instruct people to worship him, but rather to follow him and to love one another as he has loved us. Matthew is the only Gospel that records any worship of Jesus and that occurred only after the resurrection.

It seems clear to me that the Incarnation is meaningless if it could only happen once! We talk about Jesus being unique and fully human and fully divine. Most of us are quick to grant his divinity, but few of us are willing to acknowledge and understand the power of his humanity. I don't think Jesus was unique - I think we are unique. What I mean by that is that Jesus walked in the will of God, most of us most of the time do not. We make the choice. What the Incarnation indicates to me is that Jesus was in a state of Grace and was in that state of Grace not because God chose him, but because he chose to do what God willed him to do. Jesus tells us that he loves us because God first loved him. What Jesus doesn't say and should have said is that he accepted God's love. Being in a state of Grace is incarnational because what happens when we experience Grace is that suddenly we experience the Word in ourselves becoming flesh. I have experienced this and know it to be true.

We are told that Grace is a free gift of God, but it also needs to be said that we help determine the power of that gift for our own lives. Grace is not a constant quality in human behavior, it was in Jesus. It is not Grace which is limited but human understanding of its implications for freedom. One of the miracles about Jesus for me was that his life reveals to me that we are provided the power to transvaluate our pasts to give our memories new meanings and to look again at our future. Being in a state of Grace is having the power of self-identification, self-acceptance, self-repentance, and self-understanding. If we accept the gift of Grace then we are free to repent, to trust, to love selflessly, and also to glimpse the real meaning of acceptance through God's amazing love.

Being in a state of Grace, as Jesus was, enabled him to accept the freedom that God offers to us all. Freedom accepted and abused is the opposite of freedom accepted and rightly used - and the distinction between use and abuse is reflected in the physical realities of our lives. The will to freedom or Grace is the very essence of our humanity, but we are not well served by freedom that is disobedient to the call of God for selfless love. I think this is why fundamentalist religion is so rigid. People misuse and misunderstand the nature of their own Grace and freedom. Grace is the gift that provides us with the sustenance of our human existence.

Despite all the suffering, death and evil in our world God calls us to accept that the ultimate principle of reality is in love itself. Jesus was the manifestation of the reality of God's love in the world. An incarnational understanding of Grace takes seriously the potential of human beings to overcome sin and alienation. Interpretation of scripture most often divides us from the physical realities of our lives. Scripture reveals Jesus physically involved with the people he ministered to. He touched people and walked with them and fed them. Even the people of his time observed that the Word made flesh behaved in ways that many did not consider religious. He mediated the Word through communion, physical communion with his people. The word which becomes flesh and mediates itself through healing, touching. Grace came through Jesus as a human agency in struggle and judgement.

It was through Grace that I experienced the resurrection of not only Jesus, but my own body-self. I understand through resurrection that I am one person. One body-self. My body and mind and soul are one. Beyond the rigid roles my society has set for me in Christ I am free to be me. Through the renewal of my own body-self I discover that through intimate relationships with others I become a disciple of Jesus and a server of the commonwealth of God.

Jesus accepted God's will for his life. Jesus accepted himself bodily, physically in the world. It is interesting to note that authentic self-acceptance is essential to humility. Jesus was very humble. This indicates to me that he accepted himself on all levels including his physical self. Self-acceptance brings with it the certain knowledge that we are the bodies we live in. In my understanding the Incarnation and the Resurrection have both continuity

and discontinuity with the body. Jesus was not a ghost or spirit. He was a bodily person and scripture indicates that even in the final resurrection of all the saints we will have some kind of body. It is a mistake to negate the miracle of all we have been given by God.

In saying that Jesus is not God I don't negate the messianic power of his life. I acknowledge Jesus as Savior and in the Risen Christ I discover the reality of God. Living within us is a polarity between what is physical and what is spiritual. Growth in our relationship with ourselves as spiritual and physical entities can bring with it a fresh realization of our unity with other persons and also with God. Jesus accepted the polarities within himself and that's why it was possible for him to respond in very physical ways to other persons as unique to him as he was to them. Can we not also understand the diversity and polarities in our individual selves through our experience of the universe and God. The Father God in the Sky and the Round, warm Earth Goddess are one and the same. The Transcendent and the Imminent are One. In living with the contradictions within our individual selves we also live with the New Testament polarity of the now and the age to come which promises to be fulfillment. In Paul's great vision the unity of us all - "There is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:28). In recognizing and accepting all of ourselves, physically and spiritually, we allow the eschatological vision of Jesus to embrace and transform our present existence. This is what I call incarnational and being in a state of Grace.

Jesus was fully conscious of God. That's why his communication with God was so powerful and also why his life opened up the reality of salvation for all of our lives. Because we are not yet whole as Jesus was whole our salvation is incompletely realized. The unhealed parts of our physical selves will continue to hurt us and others. Because we remain alienated from the incarnational wonder of our bodies our broken selves cling to lies and oppression. The first and last word of the Gospel which comes to us through Christ Jesus is Grace. Grace as forgiveness and grace as acceptance. Grace as growth towards actualization and fulfillment of our body-selves. Grace as empowerment for new life. The Word is made flesh and our flesh is affirmed and confirmed. The Word is made flesh and we dwell among each other.

Toward a sexual ethic

by
The Rev. Pepper Shields

In my desire to be a responsible human and a Christian, I face many seeming tensions. One such question I face is, "How can I express in a compatible way my sexuality and my Christian attitude?" This question has bothered me often and much. I have vacillated in my position. I have been confused. I have been wrong, or at least been unsure that a particular choice was the better of those available at that moment. At times I have felt ashamed; been conscious that I have put my own desires and needs before another's. At times I have felt good about my choices, confident that I have made the "right" decision. Often I have asked, "Did I do the ethically, morally 'correct' action? How am I to know what is, in fact, correct?" How then does one deal with the ethical problem of living out a sexually moral, ethical life?

It is not my intent (nor probably within my right) to decide how each of us is to proceed with that aspect of our lives that is sexual. The goals I have in mind in this article are to suggest some questions for consideration and to say what I have found to be a workable plan for me. It is hoped that these thoughts will be helpful to those who are, like I, seeking a positive approach to living as a whole, integrated, caring person in community.

I am a sexual being. God created my desire for sexual expression. That sexual urge is, as are all aspects of my createdness, good. Being sexual does not require the stamp of approval which we label "moral or immoral," "good or bad." The sex urge simply is -- simply because of the way we have been created. The attitude that sex is sinful, promoted by a Victorian society (but by no means only by that society) is a strong one. That attitude, persistent though it is, must be laid to rest. It is not sex itself that is sinful or capable of being evil, but rather the misuse or abuse of that sexual urge. What one chooses to do with the God-given sex drive determines whether

that gift becomes a blessing or a curse.

Down through the history of the Church much that has been said and written has assumed sex (for the sake of sex) as evil. Too often the argument has been that the purpose of sex is to continue the species. Recreational sex and the use of sex as an expression of affection have been blasphemed and persecuted. It is not within the scope of this article to react to that argument. I maintain the thesis that one of God's ways for us as humans to express our love and caring is through the avenue of sexual sharing.

How, though, does one proceed to live in such a way that will allow one to express one's sexuality in a way that is ethically and morally Christian? How can I follow the teachings of God and fulfill my calling to care for others, while not compromising my own being and needs? It would appear to me that I have at least four approaches available. I can 1) deny all expressions of the sexual part of me; 2) seek only my own good to the denial of others involved; 3) seek only other-seeking expressions regarding sex; or 4) attempt to bridge the gap between the previous two options and search for a meaningful expression that will be mutually satisfactory and enriching for all involved. It is my belief that the latter approach is the one which makes most sense. Contrary to the popular song that says "I Am An Island," I live in community. My life is intertwined with others. Many of my needs demand that I interact with others. As I seek to touch, care for and be nourished by other humans, my sexuality can help me. In fulfilling my own needs and the needs of my brothers and sisters, my sexual expressions, if so allowed, can be beneficial.

The question with which I deal in this article is not whether sex is good, for it is from God and is therefore, in my eyes, good. The question at this point is, "How can I make good use of the God-given gift of sexuality in my relations with others and in maintaining my need to be a whole, fulfilled, caring member of the Christian community?"

First of all I might deny all expression of the sexual part of me. I might choose to, as have many, assume a stance of celibacy. While I do certainly grant that there are those who can live productive, meaningful lives void of sexual activity, that is not the case for many of us. Denial of the sex drive should not be seen as purifying oneself for service to others, as is often used by some to promote the attitude of chastity and celibacy. Should one choose that decision of celibacy, it

must be done as a sincere expression of love but not allowed to become a source of frustration. It is my opinion that one who makes a choice for celibacy should be willing to change that decision should it be found that it is being harmful to oneself or others and the relationship of caring for others.

I might choose instead to seek only my own good to the denial of the needs and rights of others. I cannot personally condone this option for I see myself as one who respects the dignity of each person. To seek only my own gratification, while denying or over-looking the needs and personhood of another, would for me be to reject my understanding of the God-image in my brothers and sisters. To lift myself and my needs above another's would be to refuse to recognize the equality of all humanity in the sight of God; it would be to say that "I am better than you, more important and more valid." Only as I am in touch with humanity and the realization that all of us are persons with rights and needs, only then am I in touch with the reality of human equality. When I say that my needs are more valid than another's, I perpetuate our persisting attitudes of inequity and deny the personhood of others. I reject the Christ's command to be lovingly involved in my neighbor's life.

I may opt for seeking only other-serving expressions of my sexuality. To do that -- to allow myself to be used by another who may or may not recognize me as a person -- is to do injustice to myself, my needs, my createdness as a worthy member of God's community. I am a human being and as such possess the needs and wants common to all humanity. The fulfillment of those needs, in so far as is possible, is vital to my welfare and to my integration into society and community. To reject my own needs, no matter how noble I may claim to be in so doing, is to say that I am not of worth; it is to assume that others are better (I am worse) and leads me to project an image of myself that can only be self-destructive.

In a society where all are equal, where all are important, where my needs are as important as (but not of more importance than) my sisters and brothers, there must be found a way of expressing my sexuality that will at once regard my own needs and touch the needs and rights of others. I am called to care for myself and to be caring for others. Therefore I must seek to relate sexually in a way that will bridge the gap between other-serving attitudes and self-serving (selfish) attitudes. I must act out my sexuality in ways that will allow

me to fulfill and be fulfilled.

How then do I live sexually? What conduct may be called ethical, moral, Christian?

It would be simplistic of me to attempt to provide a list of rules, a set code of conduct that others could adopt as theirs. Society (and too often Christendom) has sought that route. We have too often been handed codes of conduct, been bound by tradition's decided rules. And some of us have secretly (and at times not so secretly) rebelled. We have questioned and at times rejected those rules. We have at times been uncomfortable living by those codes, and have had moments of guilt and confusion when we chose to disregard those rules. And yet there have been for many of us times when we have, having disobeyed the

rules, found peace and joy and fulfillment. We have sensed that we have been actively touching the hurts and needs of others. We have found ourselves being nourished; we have sensed that we have been affirmed, loved, cared about, and recognized as humans with the ability and need to interact with our brothers and sisters. In sharing our sexuality we have shared ourselves and have been vulnerable. We have grown, lived, been enriched and have been grateful.

Is it permissible to "trick"? Can I go to a bar and know that one of my motives for going there is to share sex with another person? Can I share a one-time-only encounter with another human, which may include a sexual sharing? Must my relationship with another person be monog-

amous, or is there room in my relationship for sexual encounters with others? Can I have sex merely for the recreation of sharing the fun of sex, or must there be the intention of building an ongoing love relationship that will involve living together "for the rest of our lives"?

Many of us would perhaps like someone to answer those questions for us once and for all -- or so we say. At least we would not have to face the responsibility for many of our choices. But then, is not responsibility perhaps the key to the whole issue? Could it be possible to live freely, finding gratifying outlets for our sexual impulses, and still be responsible? Need we not, perhaps, spend less time asking what behaviour is right or wrong, and instead

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from one of the clergypersons who held service at Christmas in Iran.

And then those who had to leave us briefly return and with them are two of the Elders who are now Trekkers. It is like the buzzing of bees. It is Pentecost. For this moment we are at one . . . with each other . . . with the whole Fellowship. We walk . . . together. And at the end of the day we talk. It doesn't really come to resolution but we separate for the night. We begin to hear, "You think your feet are more spiritual than my feet." There is a lot of projection. 'Trekker' is tired and the Trekkers are tired.

Saturday morning, our eighth day. The morning paper accurately reports the opposition we have had from officials, the courtesy we have had from people, that the Trek has continued and that we are still coming on. It reports that the petition from Monticello never materialized. The Tallahassee minister has spoken of a 'symbolic' stoning with eggs . . . and the Sheriff has said that they will also have to be 'symbolic' eggs. We begin to walk in a good spirit. As on several other nights, God has moved on God's people. We come to our stopping place and the Tallahassee minister is there banging his Bible and screaming at us. He had promised a thousand and then between 50 and 100. There are seven. They promise that God will rain hail on us. We walk right on by. He leap-frogs up to the city limits. And we decide to stop anyway. Communion. Two of us have a Holy Union. In fact we ALL have a Holy Union. We bus into town, get cleaned up, rest a bit, and go to the First Presbyterian Church of Tallahassee for a Dinner of Thanksgiving. And it is not only

Thanksgiving, but reconciliation, forgiveness and pure unadulterated love. It is Agape.

Sunday morning, some of us go back to the city limits at 8:00 to begin walking to church . . . the hobble squad is out. Some of us are late. Some of us have already had to leave for home-towns. And some of us get caught up in improbable circumstances and get lost. In the middle of that someone reports that some of us wish that some of us would just leave. Probably true a couple of days before, but now just an old, old tape presented as new.

And so, just moments before Communion some of us leave. And behind is a great feeling of desolation as others stay to celebrate wholeness in brokenness. "Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief."

But wait. From out of the departing car comes a hand giving the deaf symbol for "I love You." And as we go into service the repairing begins.

Scripture tells us that if any be sick among us, let them come forward for anointing by the Elders for healing. And so we do, to find wholeness and put away brokenness.

The service ends with no benediction because we are going to proceed to the State Capitol to join with secular sisters and brothers.

We arrive and we are the largest part of the crowd. Some of us speak to the Rally and we all seem to realize that Gay Christians are an essential part of the leadership mix for the whole Gay and Lesbian community. After the speakers are through we turn around and face our detractors. We begin to sing to those who have gathered . . . a small group of Independent Baptists, some other unidentified small group and a

group of Pentecostals. As we sing they get quieter and quieter as they deal with the fact that if we sing the same songs we just may, just may be kin to each other. "God Bless America" enrages some of the men, but finally we sing "I'll Fly Away," one of the Pentecostals begins to speak ecstatically, one of the Baptists turns on her for doing so and we leave them in their confusion and dissention.

As for us, we leave united, having come so far by faith. We are troubled even though we each have come to know exactly how we feel for ourselves about Faith and Faithlessness, about Prudence and Recklessness, about Who Jesus Is, about what the Bible Is, about Spirituality. We have even come to know just a bit of what those things mean for others of us. We are not sure, not really sure that it is ok for them to be someplace that we are not. But we know now that whatever the rights and wrongs of that may be we can uphold each one's right to personhood. And that seems to be more unity than the enemy can muster. It will have to do for now.

If God had only given us that first Communion and not brought us through the rain, it would have been enough.

If God had only brought us through the rain and not given us Sergeant Pearson in Columbia County, it would have been enough.

If God had only given us Sergeant Pearson and not given us the desperate search for kinship, it would have been enough.

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CLERGY CORNER

"ATLANTA MCC CELEBRATES PASTOR'S ORDINATION ANNIVERSARY"

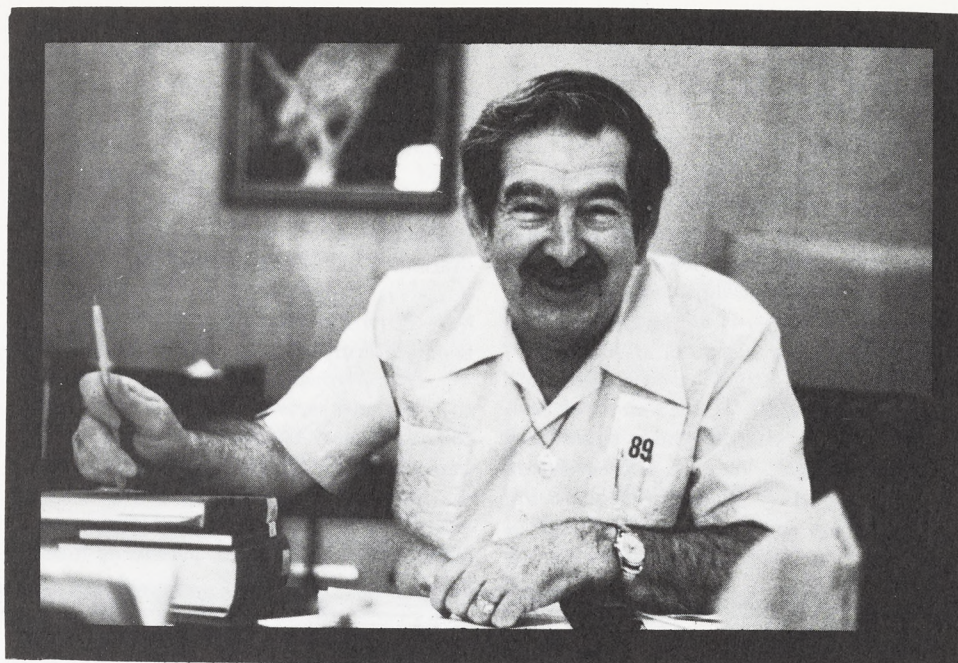
In 1920, St. John's Evangelical & Reformed Church in Massillon, OH was presenting its annual Christmas pageant. High above the display organ pipes, a brown-eyed six year old, sprouting wings portrayed the Angel Gabriel, loudly proclaiming: "Peace On Earth Among Men of Good Will." (No concern then for inclusive language.) It was really the beginning of the long trail that would lead John Hose to the Christian Ministry, and bring "Papa John" many years later to the ministry of the U.F.M.C.C.

On Sunday, June 8, 1980, Metropolitan Community Church of the Blessed Redeemer in Atlanta, GA will celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the Ordination into the Christian ministry of the Rev. Elder John H. Hose.

As he often recounts, Papa John travelled a long and arduous road to the Woman's Club in Huntington Park when he (as he describes it) finally completed his journey to Nineveh! During High School days, he pursued his Christian vocation and was introduced to ecumenism by being chosen as the President of the Massillon inter-denominational Youth Council, was vice-president of the Stark County Youth Council, and President of the Evangelical League for the State of Ohio.

Graduating 3rd in his High School class of more than 200, National Honor Society, he worked in a steel mill for a year before entering Elmhurst College, Elmhurst, IL from which he was graduated cum laude in 1937. He was graduated from Eden Theological Seminary in Webster Groves, MO in 1940 with highest honors after serving concurrently as Student Assistant Pastor of St. Paul's Evangelical & Reformed Church in Belleville, IL. Rev. Hose was ordained in his home church in Massillon, OH on the 16th of June, 1940.

For the next seven years, he served congregations in the E & R denomination in Carrollton, Woodsfield, and Zanesville, OH. It was during the latter pastorate that Rev. Hose came to grips with his own sexual life-style, and the realization that he could not honestly continue his marriage relationship and his "passing" stance with



Rev. Elder John H. Hose

the church. He resigned from the ministry of the Evangelical & Reformed Church (now the United Church of Christ), and entered the business world. He spent several years in the broadcasting industry, and then went to work in the promotional advertising field -- working his way through the ranks as sales representative, district sales manager, and director of sales training.

Later, he became marketing manager in Howell, MI for a machine-tool manufacturer, moving to Howell from Grosse Point Woods, MI. Finally, he joined one of the leading management consulting firms in Chicago as a Consultant and Sales Manager for their national accounts. It was during this period that he came to Los Angeles to open their offices here as the Manager of the LA outlet.

Rev. Hose and his late partner, Ray Street, moved to Los Angeles in February of 1968. It was in the fall of that year that Rev. Troy Perry began Metropolitan Community Church of Los Angeles. Ray and Rev. Hose first attended services on February 6 of that next year (1969) at the Huntington Park Woman's Club. As Troy recalls on page 135 ff. in "THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD," when he had his first encounter with John Hose, both he and John knew that the call, which really began at age 6 for John was now being fulfilled. The rest -- as far as involvement with the UFMCC is concerned -- is history.

On Sunday, June 8, 1980, the congregation in Atlanta will honor their Senior Pastor. They will be joined by Rev. Perry in celebrating the 40th anniversary of Papa's initial ordination into the Christian

Ministry. Although only 20 of those years have been set aside by Rev. Hose to the actual pastoral ministry, he never ceased in his involvement to bringing the good news to people.

In the interim years, he taught Sunday School classes, supplied pulpits, served on church boards and ultimately became an ordained Elder in the Presbyterian Church as well. He has also taught at two major universities, and in 1971 was granted the degree of Master of Science in Education by the University of Southern California, as the recipient of a government grant.

He is listed in "Who's Who In Religion," "Who's Who In Community Service" (Cambridge, England), and is the framer of the Statement of Faith of the U.F.M.C.C. He has served the Board of Elders of this Fellowship, 9 years as vice-moderator, and 2 years as Treasurer. He has pastored our churches in Los Angeles, San Diego, Tampa, and now in Atlanta. We are confident that all of our readers rejoice that Papa's journey brought him from the organ loft in Massillon, OH to this place in our lives. (Ed. note: Needless to say, he lost the wings a long time ago.)

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Finally, I reject the idea that America's problem is a spiritual one, when the District of Columbia already has more than 600 churches, but not a single voting congressperson or senator; and when the sponsors of this vast meeting can individually gross more than \$51 million a year, while people are sleeping in the streets and our young people can't get a job.

Spotlight

The Board of Elders has appointed T. Earlye Scott as the editor of *In Unity*. Scott has been serving as interim editor for approximately 6 months.

But who is T. Earlye Scott? T. Earlye Scott is a pseudonym that Paula J. Schoenwether uses. Schoenwether began writing the column "The Bottom Line" for *In Unity* while she was a closeted lesbian school teacher. Because she was closeted and wanted to write, she wanted anonymity. But why continue to use that name? "There are a couple of reasons why I still use my pseudonym. I never want to forget the pain that I suffered while closeted. Using that name always reminds me what I went through and what others are still facing daily.

"I also am trying to be published and I'm using the name Scott for that. I want to be consistent. Besides, my own name is difficult to say and to spell."

Schoenwether taught school in Michigan for 10 years and during that time was advisor of publications for a 2,000 student high school. Her yearbooks won national acclaim. In addition, she taught high school journalism and English.

She grew up in a newspaper family, her father being the publisher of a small daily newspaper.

"I guess I never could get that interest out of my blood. And I tried. I vowed I would never be involved in journalism, but when I started teaching that became my major responsibility," she said.

Schoenwether also worked as a reporter for United Press International in the St. Louis, MO bureau.

"Although I only worked for UPI one summer, it was exciting and a good experience. I applied for a summer position to prove something to myself and to obtain more credibility. I figured since I was teaching journalism I ought to be in the field again. I didn't want to be accused of 'those who can't do, teach.'"

She explained that she had intended to continue teaching, but that God apparently had other plans for her life. "It became increasingly more difficult to remain in the public school system and to hide my sexual orientation. I realized that I could not do that and be honest with myself and with my students. When I moved to Los Angeles I had no plans of working for UFMCC but

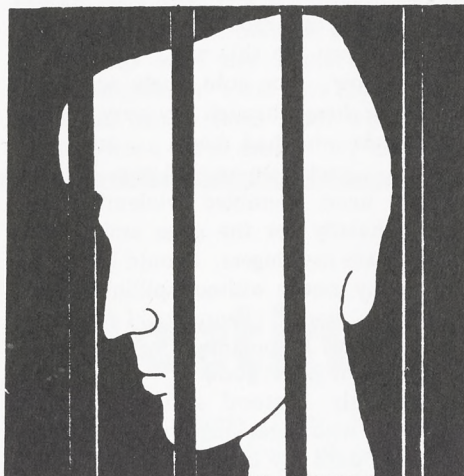
God had other ideas."

Schoenwether related that about seven years ago she was doing a values clarification exercise with her students and she participated in the exercise. The question was: What would you like to be doing 10 years from now and what do you think you'll actually be doing 10 years from now?

"I remembered a couple of months ago that lesson plan. I had written that I would like to be editor of a magazine. Because I knew that was an impossibility I said I thought I'd still be teaching."

According to her, being involved with UFMCC is very fulfilling. "MCC is one of the best things that has ever happened in my life. I was unchurched for 12 years and I always felt empty. I just couldn't find the 'right' place to worship. And then a friend introduced me to MCC Detroit. I knew then that I had indeed found the place I had been looking for."

The laity and lay involvement are



Institutional Ministries ...

By John Donnelly
Assistant Director
Institutional Ministry

MCC of the Pomona Valley hosted a weekend seminar titled "You're Busted - What Now?" The good people of MCC Pomona spent several months in planning and preparing for a very successful and spirit-filled weekend. Many ex-offenders participated in the weekend by sharing their experiences of being busted and incarcerated. This aspect of the weekend was very painful for the participants. Bringing up the pain from the past took its toll in the form of quaking voices, moments of silence and tears. The overriding feeling

important issues to the new editor. "I suppose I could be classified a radical lay person. I believe in strong lay involvement. For me that means in worship, in the growth of the church and on a Fellowship level. I am strongly opposed to the theory that in order to be in worship, one has to have a position of some type. I know that God has called me to be active, but not to have to be a deacon in order to do that."

Schoenwether is a member of a new study group, De Colores MCC. "It's exciting to be part of a new group. There is so much space to grow, to change and to experiment. We aren't saddled with the 'But that's how we've always done it' syndrome."

Schoenwether graduated from Central Michigan University with a B.A. and attended Michigan State University and the University of Detroit. She is 32 years old and resides with her spouse, Nancy Wilson, in Los Angeles, CA.

was one of trust in God through all the degrading and dehumanizing aspects of each individual's bust.

Speakers for the weekend included a detective from the Pomona Police Department, a Deputy District Attorney of Los Angeles County, a bail bondsman, a defense attorney, Rev. Bob Arthur, Director of OIM and Dr. Susan Kuhner, an openly gay woman who is the supervisor of the adult outpatient department of the Pomona Valley Mental Health Center.

Mary Snider, a defense attorney, shared that statistically one out of every ten Americans would be busted. She also shared that the statistics for Gay Americans was significantly higher. All of the speakers gave information as to what to do if you are ever busted.

The Sunday morning worship service was conducted by all ex-offenders or people involved with the prison ministry program. The Rev. Bonnie Daniel, MCC Bakersfield, preached a very moving testimony/sermon on her conversion to Christianity while in prison. The Holy Spirit was indeed present during the service. Our special thanks go to Rev. Jane Carl, pastor of MCC Pomona, and Gene Fry, deacon candidate of MCC Pomona, for their diligent work in helping to make the weekend a spiritual success.

ONE OF CHRISTOPHER
COLUMBUS' CREW MEMBERS
IN 1492 WAS A BLACK MAN
NAMED PEDRO ALONZO NINO.

The good fight . . .

by kurt kreisler

It had happened again. I awoke to the alarm with no memory of the night before . . . unable to recall what I had seen on TV . . . what I had eaten for dinner. It wasn't new to me but it was something I had been dreading . . . this time. It had been so quick! It was only a month before that I had convinced myself that I could handle liquor and started drinking again. At first it had seemed that I had it made. A few drinks in the evening and that was all. Nothing important. But in that time I had graduated to a quart a night . . . every night.

I groaned with anguish and lit a cigarette. My first thought was for a drink but I couldn't move. The sound of the alarm hurt my pounding head and I shut it off with an impatient 'snap'. Had to get ready for work . . . couldn't be late . . . couldn't let them suspect that anything was wrong!

I hauled myself painfully from the bed. Even sitting up was an endurance test. I was shaky and unstable. I crept slowly into the bathroom, my mind still in an oppressive fog. I glanced hesitantly up

into the mirror and what I saw shocked me. My eyes were puffy and swollen . . . eyeballs red. My face was bloated but still drawn in pain and dissipation. Oh, hell! I just couldn't go to work looking like that . . . like walking death! I did the only thing it was natural for me to do. I went haltingly into the kitchen and quickly fixed myself a 7 a.m. drink of scotch and soda and went back to the bed with it. As I sat there, I stared for a long while at the glass, my head swirling. Resist it! Something way down in my being was trying to stop me even now. Don't take that drink! And then . . . well, Kurt . . . right back where you started from . . . what is it this time . . . another hospital . . . another halfway house? My mind quickly ran through the possible choices. But this time you're trapped and you probably won't get out of it. You'll just die this way. It's too late for help now. The cold, rusty scalpel of rabid fear sliced through my very soul. I had friends who had died . . . gone into seizures . . . ended up on skid row.

My hand trembled violently as I reached hastily for the glass and felt its chill beneath my fingers. I could barely get it up to my mouth without spilling it. One swallow . . . good . . . another. I could feel the warmth of it spreading in my stomach and I thought it felt good.

Suddenly I stood and ran for the bathroom with wracking dry heaves . . . wrenching until my chest hurt and my eyes watered . . . tears running down my face. I gasped for breath desperately. The thought flashed through my feverish, dying brain - this had been happening every morning . . . aren't you tired of it . . . don't you want to live? I returned weakly to the bed and gulped down the rest of the drink. Soon . . . soon the shakes would stop and I wouldn't be sick anymore. It would be okay . . . okay. God knows I had been through it enough to know. Eight times in and out of hospitals including Camarillo State Mental Hospital. Twice through a gay half-way house . . . all in the space of two years. It had destroyed an eight year union with someone I loved very much. It had cost me most of my belongings and my car. But even that hadn't stopped me. I still thought I could drink like other people . . . like 'normal' folks . . . and had gone back to the bottle after each time. I fixed myself another one and downed it quickly

so that I couldn't taste nor smell it. I had never liked alcohol for its flavor . . . only for what it could do for me. Now it was killing me . . . slowly.

I waited until 9 a.m. and called the office. I couldn't come in . . . I had been sick all night . . . didn't know what the hell was wrong but I just couldn't make it in to work today. I felt a pang of guilt as the operator said she was sorry and hoped that I felt better soon. I had told another lie! But what was one more after all the others?

I stretched out on the bed again and tried to go back to sleep. I just couldn't . . . I was too sick. About an hour later the phone rang and I answered it with trepidation. It was my boss. Some polite conversation, the fear rising rapidly in my throat.

"Kurt . . . have you started drinking again?" Simple . . . straight forward . . . and I was mortally panicked! What to say. It was now or never!

"Yes." It was over . . . I'd either lose my job or I wouldn't and at that particular moment it didn't seem to matter . . . I was too ill to care. I was morbidly frightened that I was going to die.

Suddenly I began to listen more carefully. There was no condemnation in the voice or in the words . . . just matter-of-fact encouragement and concern.

"What are you going to do about it?" Spoken softly.

"Stop."

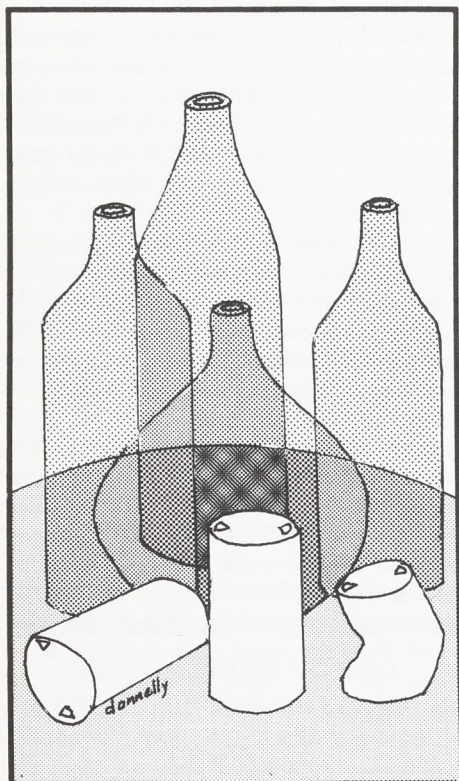
"When?"

"Tonight . . . I'll stop tonight . . ."

"Okay . . . good luck . . . and if you need me just call . . . I mean it!"

That was it. I had given my word . . . but now, down to the real nitty gritty, could I really do it? Maybe it was too late. It wasn't. I could . . . and I did . . . for that night.

The next day I forced myself to go to work. It had to be one of the most painful and miserable days I've ever spent in my life! Every moment dragged by like an eternity and I thought it would never end. I was sick and I knew it. I also had to take two busses home and all the while I felt that I just wouldn't make it . . . I'd just simply pass out on the street first. I drank again that night. I felt that I had to . . . I felt so terribly sick. I had been around Alcoholics Anonymous for years and also Alcoholics Together, the Gay group. Some of it should have penetrated simply by osmosis but somehow I just couldn't force myself to go to a meeting. I simply didn't want people to know that I had 'slipped' again. I just couldn't face it.



That night I did something that was very rare for me. I prayed my heart out about my alcoholism. I begged that God would help me not to drink anymore and that I go through the withdrawals easily. I had no idea if anyone was there listening to my pleas or not but I just acted as if there were. I slept fitfully.

The next day was Saturday and I slept all day . . . also again on Sunday. When I finally got up I was truly amazed. No shakes . . . no urge to take a drink! That had never happened to me before. I had always had the shakes so terribly that I couldn't even handle a glass of water . . . and I had usually ended up in a hospital for detoxification. Not this time and I was more than grateful!

That Monday I went to work feeling at least a thousand percent better. I had been having long discussions with myself and had decided to be open and honest about the whole situation to my friends at the office. I was tired of lying . . . sick and tired. And my friends they turned out to be, too! Many of them had suspected and had asked Phil, my boss, about the possibility that I might be drinking again. Looking back on it now, I don't see how anyone could have missed it. Even my

personality had changed . . . and certainly my appearance had. Down to the last person they offered me their understanding and encouragement and it certainly made things so much easier for me during a very trying time. To this day they still act a little protective of me.

You see . . . I'm an alcoholic and I work for the Fellowship Offices. I'm an editorial assistant and the typesetter for this magazine . . . and proud of it. I've been sober 4 months now . . . 120 days and I've never felt better! I still have no urges to take to booze again . . . thank God! I can walk down the street and look people in the eyes once more and hold my head up with a certain amount of pride. I notice the blue of the sky again and how pretty the mountains are in the distance. Life has new meaning for me now and I no longer dread the day to come. I can do things . . . anything I want . . . go places . . . without being afraid to be too far away from the bottle. I interact with other human beings and am coming out of my shell more each day. And the best thing of all is that my relationship with my Higher Power has improved greatly. I still have my problems but I can handle them sober where I was helpless when I was drunk. My worst day

sober is still better than my best day on the alcohol. It's marvelous!

There are many stories at the Fellowship Offices . . . mine is only one . . . but it shows the mutual care and concern we all have for one another. It's a great feeling and a pleasure to be around those people.

Alcoholism is a deadly disease. It can't be cured . . . but it can be arrested by simply not drinking. If it's allowed to run rampant it can only end in one of two things . . . insanity or death. So, if anyone out there is having trouble with alcohol . . . and the rate is extremely high among gay people . . . seek help . . . *now!* All it takes to start is to open up to another human being that you have a drinking problem. By doing this you also admit to yourself that you need help. You'll find most of the world accepting and understanding . . . even admiring of your desire to stop killing yourself. It's a terribly slow way to commit suicide . . . and life, even with its problems, is too wonderful to let go of so easily. And God will help . . . ask me . . . I've been there and I made it back. Some people never do. Don't let yourself . . . or a loved one . . . become one of those . . . another statistic.

God bless!

Elders' Meeting Update

The following are highlights of the Board of Elders meeting of April 14-17 in Vancouver, British Columbia.

- * Good Samaritan MCC, Norfolk, VA has been designated a mission church.
- * MCC-Illiano, Quincy, IL has been designated a chartered church.
- * Press release was issued: "The Board of Elders of the UFMCC calls upon the Canadian government to put an immediate stop to the senseless slaughter of one of God's creatures, the Harp Seal. This cruel and inhumane treatment is morally indefensible according to Christian and humanitarian standards."
- * Approved Editorial policy for In Unity and appointed an editor, Paula Schoenwether.
- * The Board of Elders will be reviewing (at our June meeting) the last three months of reports for chartered churches, looking into their charter status.

* Received reports from Rev. Von Buhler and Rev. Mojica on outreaches into Spain and the Hispanic Americas respectively.

* Rev. Jan Weymouth is the Extension Coordinator for New Zealand; Rev. Stan Harris is the Assistant Coordinator.

* The Elders moved to initiate legal action in the name of the UFMCC against American Christian Cause for their publishing of the libelous pamphlet "How the Homosexuals Are Using The Church In America."

* The new task definition of the Faith, Fellowship and Order Commission: ". . . our work ought to be directed towards a practical application of the information assembled. . . including, but not limited to seasonal liturgical (Lent, etc.), and study guides: a) ethics b) stewardship c) sexuality d) Scripture e) in-reach f) outreach."

The Chair is Rev. Brenda Cisneros -

Hunt, MCC-Detroit. New members have been appointed, we are waiting for confirmation.

* The Commission on Christian Social Action is now the Department of Christian Social Action, operated out of the Washington Field Office, with liaisons in local churches. The change was made to accomodate reality (it has been operated as a Department along the lines of the Office of Institutional Ministry).

* The Elders had not received any applications for the Chair of the Committee on Church Hymnody as of our April meeting. Since then a few have been received.

* The Theme for General Conference X, in Houston, TX, will be "By No Other Name."

(Minutes can be ordered from UFMCC Offices.)

samaritan theological institute

STI QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS 1980

Out of the 550 persons on the STI mailing list (UFMCC clergy, ministerial students, and interested laypeople in the U.S. and Canada), 107 responded to the questionnaire sent out in January. This constitutes a 19% response. The respondents can be broken down into the following categories:

GENDER: Male - 63%, Female - 37%

AGE: Ranging from under 20 to over 60 with almost half in their 30's.

POSITION IN UFMCC: 39% were clergy, 23% exhorters or ministerial students, 15% deacons, 18% lay members, and 3% friends.

DISTRICT OF UFMCC: Every district in the U.S. and Canada was represented, with the most coming from the Southwest (28%)

and the Northwest (15%).

FORMAL EDUCATION: 60% have earned a Bachelor's degree or more, with 27% holding a graduate degree (Masters or Doctorate).

Another 34% have attended a college or university.

47% of the respondents described themselves as very aware of STI and the programs/services it offers, 51% as somewhat aware, and 1% as not aware.

PROGRAMS OF INSTRUCTION

For whom? STI has provided programs of instruction for laypeople, ministerial students, and clergy, and the respondents overwhelmingly desire STI to continue to educationally serve all three groups (92% for ministerial students, 90% for laypeople, and 87% for the clergy). 60% thought that the primary emphasis should be on ministerial students, 10% on clergy, and 5% on laypeople.

What kind? As far as balance between resident and extension programs of study, 62% want an equal emphasis on both, 20% a primary emphasis on resident program, 12% a primary emphasis on extension program, 5% to continue the extension program only, and none to continue the resident program only.

As far as the make-up of the extension program, respondents overwhelmingly approved continuing all three components: correspondence courses (98%), one-day seminars (92%), and intensive courses (80%). 43% thought the primary emphasis

of the extension program should be on correspondence courses, 7% on intensive courses, and 5% on one-day seminars.

What level? STI presently offers senior college level instruction. 62% want a continuation of this level of instruction, 50% want graduate level instruction, 48% general instruction (applicable to all persons regardless of level of education), and 20% junior college level instruction. This indicates that a majority want STI to continue as a senior college, but half also desire some graduate level programs, and almost half want some general programs offered also.

OTHER SERVICES PROVIDED

The respondents were asked to rate the other educational services and resources that STI offers as very important, important, slightly important, or unimportant - discontinue. The services/resources to be evaluated were library, bookstore, copies of faculty essays and ordination theses, recommended bibliography, academic/vocational guidance, EQUIP YOURSELF (newsletter of educational resources and opportunities), and administration and grading of the UFMCC proficiency exams for ministerial candidates.

The highest rated was library (2.36 out of a possible 3.0). Second highest was academic/vocational guidance (2.31). Tied for third place were EQUIP YOURSELF and the proficiency exams (2.16). The remaining services were ranked in order: recommended bibliography (1.96), bookstore (1.86), and copies of faculty essays and ordination theses (1.85).

The service that received the most votes for "discontinue" (7) was the bookstore. Several persons recommended that the Church Services Department in the UFMCC offices could handle book orders for local congregations and individuals, and that STI need only provide textbooks to STI students and not try to serve the whole Fellowship.

The other service that received a significant number of "discontinue" votes (6) was the proficiency exams. Of those who indicated why they felt this way, one said that STI should not have to take a "bum rap" for these unpopular exams, that MCAC should take full responsibility for them. Three others stated that STI should not handle these exams, but that a separate committee of clergy should do so. Also

relating to the proficiency exams, four persons want STI to prepare a study guide or correspondence courses to help students prepare for the exams.

Other suggestions for resources and services that STI could provide include: dorms for resident students or other housing arrangements (2 requests), employment and housing referrals for resident students (2), field placement (2), field work (2), research (2), counseling training (1), book reviews (1), and tapes for the blind (1).

Suggestions for lay programs. 5 respondents asked for lay education curriculum, 4 for deacon training, 3 for local church officer training, 2 for a manual for new study groups, and one each for membership class packets for local congregations and self-study and renewal guides for local congregations. One person urged, "Do not neglect the laity." Another wanted STI to be an educational resource center for local congregations.

Several of these requested items which are now being handled by the new Christian Education Department of the UFMCC, such as resource packets for membership classes, deacon training, and new study groups, and lay education curriculum.

Suggestions for extension program. 12 respondents asked for more correspondence courses, and 4 for degrees for correspondence courses. A common theme was that they would prefer to spend their money for correspondence courses from STI than from some other school, like Christian International University. One person recommended the use of tapes in correspondence courses, and another suggested that the correspondence courses be tapes of the resident classes rather than separately written courses. One person really appreciated the personal written feedback on the correspondence courses and desired to see it continued.

5 respondents asked for more seminars, and one suggested "roving" seminars that could be presented all over the United States.

4 persons asked for regional facilities or extension centers. One recommended local and district liaison, and another that STI use clergy and educated persons in local congregations to teach STI seminars and courses in that congregation. There were also two requests that STI offer

courses in areas surrounding Los Angeles, like Orange County and the Valley.

ACCREDITATION AND APPROVAL

STI presently has the California state status of religiously exempt school. 83% of the respondents think that STI should seek California state approval and regional accreditation. 7% did not think STI should seek accreditation. Reasons for accreditation included the ability to transfer credits and degrees and to qualify for graduate study (33 responses), enhancement of the prestige and credibility of STI (11), enhancement of the credibility of the UFMCC and our clergy (10), attraction of more students (9), expansion and improvement of institution (4), assurance of quality of program (2), and assurance that STI is on a par with other institutions (2). Other reasons (one person each) included a better definition of mission, an upgrading of services and faculty, a good morale boost for the UFMCC, a challenge, an aid in fundraising, and a necessity in order to work jointly with other institutions.

AFFILIATION WITH OTHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

28% thought that STI should unite with another institution and supplement ministerial training with distinctively MCC subjects. 64% thought that STI should work with other institutions but remain independent. 8% do not want any kind of affiliation. This shows that an overwhelming majority (92%) would favor some kind of cooperation with other educational institutions.

6 respondents said that UFMCC should not try to build its own seminary but encourage ministerial candidates to pursue education at existing seminaries. This would build ecumenical ties, make the UFMCC ecumenically richer, and give greater opportunity for UFMCC students to be resources/witnesses about homosexuality and inclusive Christianity in the established seminaries. One person suggested that STI affiliate with an established quality seminary and set up an affiliated study center to supplement regular seminary courses with specific UFMCC courses. Another said that we should not try to duplicate courses that other seminaries teach, but instead offer uniquely MCC subjects (sexuality, homosexuality, UFMCC polity, etc.). Another wanted STI to provide post-seminary instruction in MCC subjects. One person offered the view that STI could not adequately educate people

for the professional ministry because STI cannot offer a full program and it is too conservative and unradical.

6 other respondents want STI to be the official training seminary of the UFMCC. Two of them suggested that the Fellowship change its emphasis from using clergy from other seminaries to using those graduating from STI. Another commented that future MCC pastors need to be trained by experienced MCC faculty at an MCC seminary. One person wants STI to offer intensive courses that would be mandatory for clergy from other denominations coming into MCC in order to introduce them to the Fellowship.

LOCATION

19% thought that STI should remain in Los Angeles only, and 20% that it should move to another location. 60% think that more than one location should be set up. There is thus considerable feeling (80%) for some kind of facilities outside of the Los Angeles area.

Several suggested locations were given for a new site or additional location, including Chicago (10), San Francisco/Berkeley (8), New York City (4), Boston (2), Dallas (2), Washington, D.C. (2), and St. Louis (2). Minneapolis/St. Paul, New Orleans, Atlanta, and Kansas City got one vote each. As far as general area, 9 persons said mid-continent, 2 for the Mid-West, 2 for the East, 2 for Florida, 1 for the Northwest, 1 not in the South because of racial prejudice, and 1 for an extension outside of the Western Hemisphere.

FUNDING

All four sources of present income were overwhelmingly affirmed: student tuition and fees (95%), general budget of the UFMCC (93%), individual donations (85%), and local congregations and districts (70%). 25% thought that the primary source of funding should be the general budget of the UFMCC, 12% that the primary source should be student tuition and fees, 7% the local congregations and districts, and 4% individual donations. Other suggestions for funding included government or foundation grants (14 persons); endowments, bequests, and wills (9); fundraising (4); federal aid to students (1), 1% District tithe (1); and additional local tithe to UFMCC for STI (1).

One person said that if the Fellowship wants to build a school, it needs to invest much more money. Another was of the

opinion that well-trained clergy should be the number 1 priority of the UFMCC, and that half of the general budget should go to building a seminary. This seminary should have branches in each district, with the main school being in Los Angeles, where students could earn a Master's or Doctorate degree.

Miscellaneous comments about finances: STI should be financially independent of the Fellowship; keep the tuition low; give a discount to clergy to encourage their continuing their education; and have special funds for Third World people (blacks, Latinos, etc.).

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR STI

Public Relations and Promotion. Eight persons recommended more visibility and exposure to local congregations. One suggested that someone tour on behalf of STI to promote it, and another that there be promotional materials at District and General Conferences. Another suggested that STI work with other Fellowship institutions and agencies to provide educational materials and to promote what STI has to offer.

Relationship to the Fellowship. One person each made the following comments: STI should be autonomously governed; STI should be autonomous from UFMCC headquarters; STI should be more independent of the UFMCC so that it can be intellectually ahead of most of our churches and set the pattern for our ministry; and STI should be financially independent of the Fellowship. Another said that STI should play an active leadership role in the Fellowship in education unique to the gay community.

Faculty. Three persons called for more faculty, and one specifically asked for more women faculty. Another recommended that STI continue to attract high calibre faculty.

Course content. One person each made the following suggestions: offer a required course on inclusive language; take into account non-pastoral ministers (educators, administrators, theologians, etc.); students and clergy need to deal more with sexual identity fears and insecurities; women's studies (women's history, feminist theology, ministry to and of women); affiliate with someone who can offer clinical experience to students; teach

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if you love the lord, say amen

By Pete C. Miller

"If you love the Lord, say Amen!" This statement can be heard any Wednesday through Sunday in one of the MCCs across the US or Canada. Rev. Ron Anderson of the New Freedom Evangelistic Team begins each spiritual renewal with this, then the entire group sings, "What a fellowship, what a joy divine, leaning on the everlasting arms."

The New Freedom Evangelistic Team is the only traveling group in the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. It is a fundamental full-gospel group that has a special outreach to all people regardless of race, creed, color or sexual orientation. The team has a goal to reach 20 million people in the next five years, people that "main-line" churches and evangelists have told God does not love them. The fundamentalists' march on Washington has made the team's message even more important, considering the march is attempting to tell people that God does not love everybody.

Anderson's sermons deal with a variety of subjects, including "Enemies of Salvation," "The Vision," "Homosexuality and the Bible," "The Second Coming," "I Am A Child of God" and many others. He is a fundamentalist preacher who was a minister of the Assemblies of God, spent a year as a missionary in Old Mexico, and held tent revivals on the West Coast until he was

condemned for his sexuality. He is now an ordained minister in the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches where he has served for 10 years.

Karen "Scooter" Barnes has been with the team for two years. She has formal training in voice and served five years in the Navy where she received many honors, but was discharged when her sexuality was discovered. Barnes has become well known as a soprano soloist and guitarist in many of the MCCs in the U.S. and Canada.

Mark Bruzzese joined the team this year from Austin, Texas. He has a degree in piano and has had a great deal of voice training. He sings bass with the team and sometimes plays the organ during services. He has been a music director in Baptist churches and in the MCC in Austin.

Joe Miller, also of Austin, plays the piano for the team. He played the organ for a well known Fort Worth evangelist who has been a very anti-gay activist. Miller has played gospel piano and organ in many churches across the country. He was the pianist at MCC Austin for three years and played the piano with the team on their recent record album.

The New Freedom Evangelistic Team has been traveling, preaching and singing the Gospel in MCCs since September, 1976. The team began with three people from Fort Worth, TX but has since evolved into its current group and has grown, despite attack from mainstream fundamentalists. The members of the team live and travel 25-30 thousand miles a year in a converted school bus named "Shasta."

Each team member receives a salary which is less than 15% of the team's overall weekly budget of \$300. This is a "faith ministry," where no specific "charge" to the individual churches is made. The team allows churches of all sizes and financial capabilities to have the team for spiritual renewal. The churches are simply made aware of the budget and asked to take love offerings during the services.

In addition to spiritual renewal services, the team sponsors workshops on "Personal Prayer," "Local Evangelism," "Homosexuality and the Bible," "The Gay Harvest," and UFMCC 1980." These workshops can be heard every Saturday at the local church where the team is appearing. The team also has an active bar ministry in each of the cities where spiritual renewal is held.

The New Freedom Team publishes the EVANGELITE which has a circulation of nearly 2,000 and is distributed free upon request.

This year the team made its first record album entitled "I am a Child of God." The record contains many songs that stress the real truth, that God does not discriminate. It is available through the team's bookstore. All profits from the record and from the bookstore go into a fund to help establish new Metropolitan Community Churches throughout the country.

For further information about the New Freedom Evangelistic Team, write: The New Freedom Evangelistic Team, Post Office Box 371, Galena Park, Texas 77547.

Anita Bryant files for divorce

MIAMI - Anita Bryant has filed for divorce from her husband of nearly 20 years.

Bob Kunst who tried unsuccessfully for the passage of the Dade County gay-rights law said of Bryant's divorce, "If America's No. 1 normal nuclear family has to flaunt its break-up, is nothing sacred?"

"This is a unique opportunity for her to liberate herself, and I'd be delighted to assist in any way I can, Lord knows."

Bryant said that her marriage to Bob Green, former disc jockey, is "irretrievably broken."

Bryant, who gained national recognition in 1977 for her "Save Our Children"

campaign against gay rights, claims Green had cooperated with staff people who tried to control her and use her name and reputation to aid their own careers and not her ministry.

Apparently Bryant has decided to resign from Anita Bryant Ministries which is a center devoted to preserving the American Family.

Prior to Bryant's announcement regarding her impending divorce a representative from the Florida Citrus Commission said they do not plan to renew Bryant's contract to make more commercials for them.

Bryant has accused homosexuals of getting her blacklisted on television.

Congress hears testimonies on civil rights for gay men, lesbians

The first U.S. Congressional briefing on Civil Rights for Gay men and Lesbians was held in Washington, D.C. on April 21st. Directing the briefing was Member of Congress Ted Weiss (D-NY) and Henry Waxman (D-CA). The Gay Rights National Lobby Executive Director, Mr. Steve Endean, was the coordinator of the witnesses for the meeting. Those individuals invited to testify from the gay and lesbian community were the Co-Executive Directors of the National Gay Task Force, the Parents and Friends of Gays, and Reverend Troy D. Perry, representing the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.

Reverend Perry testified as to the need of the Civil Rights Amendments Act (HR 2074). Perry stated:

"Since Metropolitan Community Church started, I have heard the horror stories of people who have come to me and have talked to me about their problems on jobs where they have been discriminated against and fired only because someone made it their business to try to find out what an individual did in their bedroom, in the privacy of their home.

"I remember one young man years ago who came to me; he was a member of a very influential family in Texas. He told me he had just been fired from his job at a large insurance firm. He told me the reason he'd been fired from his job was that he had been called in and told that the bonding company discovered that he went to particular bars -- Gay bars -- in his city. For that alone he was not bondable and was fired from his job.

"In 1976 our denomination decided to hold its General Conference in Washington, D.C. Attending that Church conference was a school teacher named Clark from Akron, Ohio, who was a member of our church. At the conference we decided to hold a peaceful rally in Lafayette Square across the street from the White House, as well as a service at the Lincoln Memorial, as Christian Social Action projects. While participating in the rally in Lafayette Square, this member of our Church was seen by a member of his school board who happened to be on vacation in this city. On his return to Ohio, Clark was fired from his teaching job. No recourse was open to him without being exposed publicly as

Gay. He was fired from his job for exercising an important and personal civil rights stand far from home, in a Church-related rally in his nation's capital.

"I have another case in point. A young man from Dallas, Texas, who, after being honest about being a Deacon in our Church, was fired from his civil service job, and not hired by the Police Department in that city because he is Gay and a member of Metropolitan Community Church. Steve Childers has that case in court, you can read about it in Addendum V, an article from the Dallas Morning News titled 'Homosexual says police ignored test scores.'

"It is important that you realize and understand what Gay people are going through in this country. Blacks and other minorities have gone through this process. They have known what it is like to be discriminated against, and we do, too. I

can assure you right now that if I were to leave the ministry tomorrow I don't know where I would go to work for a living outside of the Church. I prepared myself for the ministry all my life and yet if I changed careers, I could be discriminated against in most states in this country. Yes, there are a few places like California (where, if I work for civil service, I couldn't be discriminated against) or in the City of Los Angeles, where employment discrimination is illegal. But, in other states Gay people are fired from their jobs every day of the week. I hear the stories. I know them. I have documented a few of them in this testimony."

After the briefing, Reverend Perry and Mr. Adam DeBaugh, Director of the U.F.M.C.C. Washington Field Office met with Congressional Staff members to discuss the passage of the bill. Fifty-two members of Congress are now co-sponsors.



Testifying at the congressional briefings are, FRONT ROW: Rep. Ted Weiss (D-NY) BACK ROW: Meryl Friedman, Gay Teachers, Troy Perry, UFMCC.

STI

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current trends in theology and different theological viewpoints.

Other instructional suggestions. Four persons asked for continuing education for clergy, and two for graduate degrees. Two asked for a full-time school with day classes. There was one person each advising the following: build a full-time staff; offer vocational guidance seminars and counseling; be a theological research center for the Fellowship; be a resource for literature produced within the Fellowship; be a center for intensive seminars and counseling for both clergy and laypeople.

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

- * Keep up the good work.
- * It's time that others recognized the value of STI.
- * STI is exciting.
- * You're doing an excellent job.
- * In the past STI has been considered a joke, but it has established itself through hard work as a force to be reckoned with.

WARNINGS

- * You need to be a louder voice at General Conference.
- * Avoid extreme liberalism or conservatism.
- * Do not spread your resources too thin.
- * Keep up the quality of your instruction.
- * Do not expand so fast that you lose your quality.
- * Do not branch out or diversify until your existing program is of high quality and there is some fiscal responsibility.
- * Do not cater to the whims of exhorters. Choose one location and develop a good strong program there. It is the responsibility of exhorters to go to STI, not STI's responsibility to continually branch out and diversify.
- * Do not set unrealistic goals.
- * Prevent the burnout of the STI staff.
- * I do not see any strong, intellectual leadership from STI.
- * STI is suffering from the same lack of vision and sense of mission that the whole Fellowship suffers from.

- * You need to improve the quality of your instruction.
- * You need to establish more credibility in the Fellowship.
- * There is too much academic theory; what about practical work and placement?
- * Do not entrench STI in California. Make a significant geographic move for more centrality and accessibility.

- * Work on your image outside California.
- * STI is too ingrown and California-oriented.
- * STI holds little respect in the minds of many UFMCC clergy and members.
- * STI needs permanence, durability, and real recognition as a viable, significant school

Compiled by Rev. Jeffrey Pulling
Dean of Samaritan Theological Institute

World Church Extension

By Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson

This has been an exciting year for World Church Extension. Our offerings this year tell their own story.

First of all, our offerings for World Church Extension Sunday last year totalled \$2,500. This year, so far (and offerings are still coming in) individuals have donated about \$1,500 and churches about \$14,000. We attribute much of that to the brochure which explained the specific needs and projects of World Church Extension in the UFMCC. Every month we continue to receive pledges and offerings from individuals and churches. Some churches tithe an extra one to three percent to World Church Extension. Our largest offering to date was from MCC Dallas, (\$1,400).

In addition, several other wonderful things happened. Many people returned the pledge cards offering to pray regularly for World Church Extension. Some asked us to pray for them. These cards are shared in the Fellowship Offices.

For the first time, we received significant contributions outside of the United States, from our Australian and Canadian churches. Every church in the United Kingdom gave to World Church Extension. Also, we received two individual contributions from women from a "girls secondary school" in Nigeria. The donations were in Nigerian money (cash, sent through the mail!). The larger contribution was the equivalent in U.S. money of 46 cents (a significant portion of a Nigerian person's weekly income, by the way). It was hard to describe the feeling of awe we experienced in the offices as we opened those letters and touched the Nigerian bills and coins and read the cards. That our World Church

Extension materials actually arrived in Nigeria (U.S. mail notwithstanding!) and that someone there reached back to help seemed a modern miracle!

We also received several anonymous donations of \$1 or \$10 just placed alone in the return envelope. Our only way to thank them is to hope they read this article.

Also, a group called the "Fellowship of Churches and Synagogues" in New York City (including Jewish, Protestant, Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Armenian Apostolic Churches and Synagogues) contributed \$25.00 to the Van Fund for Nigeria. They heard about our World Church Extension needs through MCC New York City members who participate in their program.

At the same time, by way of explanation, do not think that the World Church Extension Fund is just "rolling in money." Our monthly minimal obligation is about \$1,200 and that's without any expansion, and not including major travel expenditures. Also, since this is not a General Conference year, we cannot rely on the "Thursday World Church Extension Night" offering to get us through the year.

We have really seen this year that many people the world over, in and out of MCC, care about sharing God's love with the world's people. Thanks for all your caring!

**subscribe
to
IN UNITY**

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begin asking "How can I live out my sexuality in a way that is responsible -- that recognizes my own needs and wants but does not use, abuse, or discount others in the process?"

It is my firm belief that sex is a God-given gift. I affirm that I am a sexual being, just as I am a physical being and a spiritual being. For me to be totally whole, to be integrated as a human being, I must seek to fulfill those needs which will assist my welfare. I assert also that I am a person in community. The needs, rights, and dignity of my sisters and brothers are as important as my own. Therefore I wish to suggest that what we need is not yet another code of conduct, another list of rules, another structure that will strip from us the need to be assuming responsibility for our lives and actions.

When asking myself, in matters of sexual activities as well as any other decisions regarding life, is my conduct ethical or moral, I find several considerations and questions helpful. I share them now not in an attempt to tell you how you must live your life nor to set up an ethic which you must accept, but merely as an attempt to help you as you consider what it means to live in community, to be whole, and to be Christian. The following are some of the criteria I have used. You will perhaps rephrase the statements, finding some of them valid in your decision-making; others you may discard as not meaningful or relevant to your decision-making. But then that, too, is part of the process of assuming responsibility for our lives and actions -- the sifting and sorting of given information in order to arrive at what works for each of us.

When I seek to decide what is right and not right for me I ask myself the following questions:

1. Is what I intend to do in keeping with my desire to be a loving, caring human being?
2. Will what I am about to do contribute to my welfare -- will I be a more whole person, fulfilled, more able to proceed with my life as a result of this action?
3. Will what I intend to do injure, physically, emotionally, or spiritually myself or another?
4. Will what I am about to do cause me to feel "used" -- will it undermine my sense of self-worth or dignity as a God-created human being?

5. Will I, in doing what I am considering, be respecting the personhood, worth and dignity of the other/s involved?
6. Have I sought, in so far as is possible, to determine the needs and "space" of the other?
7. Will my intended action be an expression of my understanding of the teachings of Jesus with regard to my being an instrument of love and nurture to others?
8. Have I considered the long-range ramifications of what I am about to do? Am I merely considering this moment, rather than how this decision of this moment will affect the remainder of my life?

These questions, while not fool-proof, have been of help to me. I have had to ask myself many of these questions as I related to another human being. I recognize that asking each of these questions every time I need to make a choice would be tremendously burdensome. As I have practiced my interactions with others, both in and

out of bed, I find it becoming easier to decide. I find myself now asking three basic questions which appear to evaluate all of the above considerations: 1) will this action affirm my own needs, 2) will it abuse another, and 3) how will it affect my relationship with God. The process of deciding which course of action to take has become easier as I have been learning to live responsibly in light of my own needs and the needs of others.

I cannot choose (would not choose) for you how you should live out your sexuality. That is not for me to do, just as, I believe, it is not your duty or right to do so for me. Should you "trick"; should you act out your S&M fantasies; should you be involved in "orgies"; should you be living in an open relationship or a monogamous one? I cannot say. I can speak to only what works for me, and offer ideas that have helped me. The decisions you choose to make are yours. What is *ethical* or *moral* for me may not seem so to you. What you do or do not do may seem *unethical* to me -- but that, too, is a part of assuming responsibility for our own lives and actions.

EDITORIAL POLICY

In Unity is the official news and opinion journal of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.

We realize our three-fold purpose: to inform, to interpret and to entertain.

All staff members and contributing writers will be governed by ethical canons including responsibility, freedom of the press, sincerity, truthfulness, accuracy, impartiality, fair play and equality.

In Unity will strive not to be sexist, racist or ageist in its content.

Editorials by the editor or the Publishers will reflect responsible views, backed by research and fact. Contributed articles will express the opinions of the specific writer and, therefore, do not constitute endorsement by In Unity.

Articles on Fellowship news, news about the gay community at large, feedback to the magazine and articles relevant to the spiritual, intellectual and community life of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches are encouraged.

It is the goal of In Unity to be an open forum for opinions expressed by all persons within our Church.

All articles must be written in inclusive language or they will be edited to follow the guidelines of inclusive language as established by the General Conference.

All articles, letters, etc. must be signed or they will not be published. The editor has the right to edit all letters in regard to libel laws. Length of letters will be determined by space provisions.

The editor has the right to refuse to publish any article submitted for publication. Decisions will be based on readability, relevancy and editorial policy.

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If God had only given us the search, and not the finding of kinship, it would have been enough.

If God had only given us the finding of kinship and not the pain and fear, it would have been enough.

If God had only given us the pain and fear and not the at-one-ness with our whole Fellowship, it would have been enough.

If God had only given us the at-one-ness with our whole Fellowship and not the entrance into Tallahassee it would have been enough.

If God had only given us the entrance into Tallahassee and not the anointing and final Communion it would have been enough.

SITTING: Jeri Ann Harvey, Michael Cole, Sky Anderson, David Pelletier, Ken Storer, Jan Weymouth, Bob Twar, D.L. Webb, Keith Spare, Candace Naisbitt, Nancy Wilson, Gary Wilson, Richard Redfield, Laurie Lancaster, Jan Johnson, Michael England, Jean Hart, Jean White, Mary Luke Tobin. STANDING: Paula

Nielsen, Ernie Lacrosse, Papa John Hose, Rick Weatherly, Jackie Broyle, Austin Amerine, George Covington, Bruce Hill, Jeff Pulling, Roger Webb, Bob Cunningham, Marshall Williams, LaPaula Turner, Arlene Ackerman, David Gunton, Bob Arthur, Jim Dykes, Troy Perry, Freda Smith. (Photos by T. Earlye Scott)



Western ministers' conference

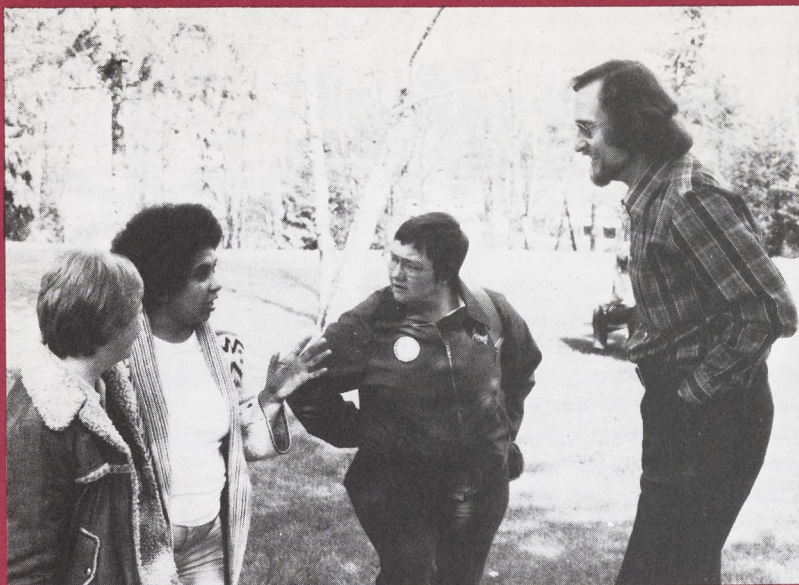


This year's Western Ministers' Conference was a tremendous experience for the 52 ministers, worship coordinators and significant others who attended (from Australia, Hawaii, Alaska, all the way east to Texas and Missouri).

We were housed at Rosemary Heights, a Roman Catholic Retreat Center south of Vancouver, B.C., run by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. Our guest speaker was Sr. Mary Luke Tobin, a social activist, author and leading authority on the life of the 20th Century contemplative, Thomas Merton. Sr. Luke shared highlights of her view of Merton's life and its implications for us.

In addition, the three day Conference included varieties of worship experiences, STI Seminars and a lively presentation by Rev. Perry on "The Gifts and Fruits of the Spirit."

Rev. Troy Perry leads a seminar on "The Gifts and Fruits of the Spirit."



TOP: (L-R) Candace Naisbitt, La Paula Turner, Jeri Ann Harvey and Gary Wilson relax and talk during ministers' conference. TOP RIGHT: (L-R) Jan Weymouth, Sky Anderson and Laurie Lancaster enjoy fellowshipping during a break. ABOVE: Sister Mary Luke Tobin leads a seminar on Thomas Merton.

fellowship family



TAMPA, FLORIDA

MCC Tampa held their first Spring Carnival and Arts/Crafts Fair. The church building and surrounding property were turned into a colorful and festive Spring Carnival. Other groups in the community also participated.

ALBANY, NEW YORK

MCC Good News moved into its own space. They are now leasing the third floor of the Gay Community Center.

COLUMBIA, MISSOURI

A member of MCC Columbia, Gene Ulrich, was elected Mayor of Bunceton, MO. The people of Bunceton (population 437), decided Ulrich would make a good mayor, even if he is "gay."

HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

MCC Hartford recently received a donation from the Salvation Army that could mean about \$10,000. The Salvation Army gave 100 silver place settings valued at \$100 each to MCC. Rev. Steve Pieters said they hope to find their own facility.

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

As part of the National Summer Offensive for Gay Rights, a Symposium titled "Gay Relationships - Spiritual Perspectives" was held at Sydney University.

The Rev. Donald E. Johnson, Pastor of MCC Sydney was one of the speakers at the Symposium.

MCC Sydney also held a retreat weekend.

NEWPORT NEWS, VIRGINIA

A Saturday evening in March. The congregation seated in a circle on the floor. Flickers of candlelight. A quiet hush. A sense of expectancy. And then the expectations fulfilled through music, song, words of Scripture, words of Life and finally the moving personal testimonies of three of our members.

MCC - Peninsula (a newly created study group in Newport News, VA) will never be quite the same again. For God truly visited us that night and poured God's Spirit of Love and Power upon us and blessed us in a marvelous way!

What better way to start off our first planning session! What better way to begin a new church!

HONOLULU, HAWAII

Rev. Dennis Moore was installed as Pastor of MCC Hawaii by Rev. A. Austin Amerine, Northwest District Coordinator.

The installation service was witnessed by a record attendance.

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Rev. Michael England is the Director of MCC San Francisco's weekly radio program "Just As I Am." The 20 minute program is aired on KFAX, the local all religious station.

The local anti-gay Christian forces, spearheaded by an "ex-gay" organization, attempted to instigate a letter writing campaign to the radio station, together with threatened cancellations by other broadcasters, to have MCC removed from the air.

Apparently there were few cancellations and a number of strong letters were sent from ministers and churches supporting MCC's right to broadcast and condemning the anti-gay tactics.

SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

MCC San Jose recently celebrated their 8th Anniversary. A special dinner was held for the celebration.

LONDON, ENGLAND

At long last, the London Church is moving into its new premises, at 2a, Sistova Road, Balham, London S.W. 12. The first service was held there on 4th May, just a week before Rev. Perry arrived to visit the Churches in England.

Another very exciting thing has happened to the London Church. They have been accepted by the Charity Commission and now have charity status, which means people can covenant and have a reduction on rates (taxes).

BIRMINGHAM, ENGLAND

Rev. Jo McVay-Abbott reports that the Church there has also found new premises, right in the centre of the city, and they expect a great influx of people to come who were unable to travel to the present place of worship.

By Rev. Elder Jean White

Rev. Jose von Buhler visited a group in Valencia, Spain, who are very interested in U.F.M.C.C. and has submitted a report to the Board of Elders.

We have had several enquiries of late to start study groups in Germany. Pray with us that the Lord will open avenues for us to begin to seriously evangelise there.

A group in Torino, Italy has written to me asking for information about U.F.M.C.C. and have invited me to attend a conference in June, or to send a delegate.

It is exciting to see avenues opening in Europe. We have been praying such a long time that places would open for us.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Metropolitan community church of Washington and First Congregational Church of Washington have shared in ministry since April 1st by meeting human needs of persons who live on the streets of Washington. This ministry has been to homeless women who are not taken care of in any way by city services and ongoing ministry programs.

On Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evening from 6:30 until 7:30 we feed a very well balanced complete meal to these women and also provide referral services for housing and other services for both men and women. This ministry has inspired and lifted the heart of the many persons who volunteer and has brought our two congregations together in a very important way.

We are doing the ministry of the New Testament and learning how to serve the Lord in serving others. This program has caused much excitement among the other downtown churches and serves as a model of ecumenical ministry. It also serves to witness to the church and community that ours is not an exclusive ministry which ignores the human need around us. Ours is a ministry which seeks to do what our Lord would do.

This program is now being expanded to five nights a week in the near future. At present the program is funded by MCC and FCC jointly and is beginning to receive funds from other churches in the community. We are excited about this new ministry.

What a wonderful time. For two weeks the members and friends of MCC DC have celebrated the nine years of ministry we have had in this city. Our celebration began on Wednesday, April 23rd with a concert by the Choir of MCC Baltimore. Then we celebrated 'THE 80's ARE OUR'S' with the Rev. Elder Troy Perry and the Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson as we shared in the Fellowship Banquet here in the Federal City.

Into the next week we went participating in the Washington for Jesus March making a witness as Gay Christians, sharing in worship with Nancy Wilson and as the second weekend approached we geared up for more celebration. The second weekend began with our 9th anniversary banquet, an annual tradition of joyful and elegant dining, with our special guest, Rosalind

Rinker. Rinker shared with us on Sunday, May 4th in worship and then lead workshops on Prayer and Personal Evangelism on Monday and on Tuesday of the following week. On Wednesday of the second week Rinker spoke again in worship at our Mid-week chapel service. All in all this was a time of real revival.

Probably one of the most important events of the entire week with Rinker was the fact that several persons for local churches came to share with us both in worship and in our workshops. We had advertised to all local churches, in all religious bookstores, and in the Washington Post and Star. It was an important outreach to other Christians. Many knew who we were and would not come, others knew who we were and wanted to come. Many were truly blessed by seeing our faith alive at work and left to tell their churches of our witness and ministry.

Now we begin to celebrate our 10th year of ministry, "The Year of the Lord's Favor." It is with joy that we look forward to a year of service to our local family, the gay community, the DC religious community, the homeless of the city who live in its streets, the Fellowship, and our World Extension Ministry. We consider it a joy to give ourselves to all of life, because our witness is that Christ has set us free to touch the lives of all people with the power of the Gospel.

HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

The National Council of Churches last week awarded the Capitol Region Conference of Churches a plaque recognizing their achievements in ecumenism in the greater Hartford area. The Rev. Joan B. Campbell, the Executive Director of the NCC Commission on Regional and Local Ecumenism, presented the award at the Annual Meeting and Banquet of the C.R.C.C. In presenting the award, she cited among the reasons for the award, the inclusion of the Roman Catholic Church, the Black Churches, and the Metropolitan Community Church. This information did not appear in any press releases or on the plaque itself; however, it is significant that she did cite the inclusion of MCC in the speech she made to the C.R.C.C.

Rev. Steve Pieters of MCC Hartford said he thinks this indicates that the NCC is beginning to recognize the significance of the Fellowship. Pieters was introduced to the CRCC as a new clergyperson in Hartford just prior to the presentation of the

award, and there was some grumbling among some people there, and the newly-elected president of the CRCC looked visibly upset by his being introduced! Then to have the Rev. Campbell get up and mention the inclusion of MCC in the award presentation made quite a few people shift in their seats!

RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA

Gays and Lesbians interested in exploring the details and dynamics of intimate relationships had a unique chance to do so in depth in a June workshop series.

The series was designed for lesbian and gay singles and couples by a team of six gay and lesbian mental health professionals. The theme was: "Lovers And Friends -- Making It Work." The team conducted most of the sessions, which were described as "learning and experiential" opportunities.

The workshop series is the 1980 Spring Forum of St. John's Metropolitan Community Church.

KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

MCC of Greater Kansas City dedicated their new chapel. The chapel features four historic traditions that form the background as an inclusive Christian Church.

There is an Icon and Votive Light from the Orthodox background. Representing the Protestant heritage is a picture of Jesus and an open Bible. The Jewish heritage is represented by a Star of David with a Cross superimposed on it. At the front of the chapel is a hand-carved walnut Celtic Cross hanging against a gold dossal curtain.

AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

MCC Auckland is growing. With attendance in the 20's the group is getting more active. They have been involved in the New Zealand Gay Rights Coalition and have proposed various activities for Gay Pride Week.

They are also supporting Women's Rights and are having a panel of women speak to this issue at a dinner.

The group also held a fund raising activity to send representatives to the 1981 General Conference to be held in Houston, TX.

WASHINGTON FOR JESUS MARCH

